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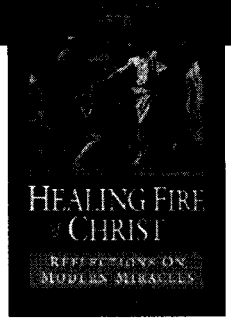

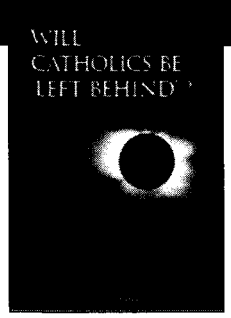

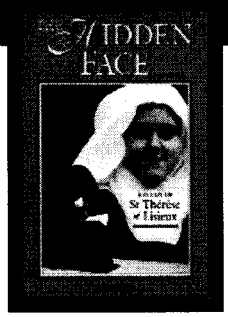

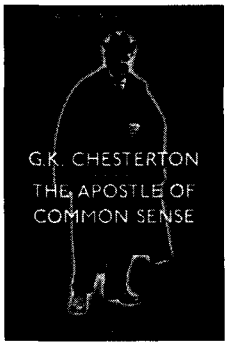

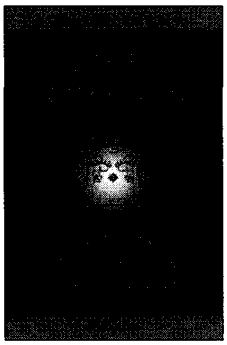

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Jews and Christians, Hate and Forgiveness

During the course of his provocative essay "The Virtue of Hate" (February), Rabbi Meir Soloveichik refers to the Mishnaic tractate *Ethics of the Fathers*. It is a pity that he didn't heed an important exhortation from that tractate: "O learned ones, do be careful with your words!" In attempting to distinguish Judaism from Christianity—a worthy enterprise—he has succeeded in simultaneously distorting Judaism and misunderstanding Christianity. There are, of course, great differences between Judaism and Christianity. Unfortunately though, Rabbi Soloveichik has stipulated a difference where there is none in principle, thus bringing confusion in place of clarity. Rabbi Soloveichik's problem is that he employs bad means for a good end. Accordingly, his essay is counterproductive for his own aims, let alone for better, more truthful, understanding between Jews and Christians.

Christians are the only non-Jewish community who regard the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, in toto, as the word of God. Thus Christians are the only non-Jewish community with whom Jews could possibly discuss Scripture as Scripture. Yet, ironically, Rabbi Soloveichik has only discussed how Christianity radically reinterpreted some scriptural teachings. When it comes to Judaism, one would think, judging from his use of Scripture as proof texts, traditional Jews simply read Scripture verbatim without coming to it and drawing normative conclusions from it through the lens of the Talmud. But the Talmud in its own way is just as radical in its reinterpretation of Scripture as is the New Testament. That fact is surely recognized when those Jews who quote scriptural verses literally for normative purposes—thereby suppressing their traditional interpretations—are castigated in the Talmud.

Rabbi Soloveichik's first source for "the virtue of hate" is Samson's justification for his own suicide, through which he was able to kill many of the Philistines, who had been persecuting him and his people. Samson seems to have figured: "Since I am going to be killed anyway, why not bring down my enemies with me?" Nevertheless, despite the commonsense quality of his reasoning, the Talmud does not look upon it favorably. His plea—"Let me die with the Philistines" (Judges 16:30)—is used to designate the attitude of someone who wants his colleague to suffer because he is suffering. That attitude is taken to be morally odious. Indeed, it is the opposite of what the Talmud records the great first century teacher Hillel to have taught as the essence of Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to someone else." Samson seems to be saying: "What is being done to me hatefully, I shall hatefully do to my enemy."

Not only is his motivation suspect, so is his action. Thus it is significant that when the Rabbis attempt to exonerate certain suicides recorded in Scripture (such as the three martyrs mentioned in Daniel 3:13-18), they do not mention Samson. They may have believed that his action was rash, and that he should have said and done what a great Rabbi said and did when confronted with the option of suicide as opposed to death at the hands of an enemy: "Let Him who gave life take it, but let not any human destroy himself." At a time when Rabbi Soloveichik is so rightfully appalled by "the actions of a man [obviously, Yasir Arafat] who . . . sent children [as suicide bombers] to kill children [and to kill themselves by so doing]," he should be more careful in picking,

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of all people, Samson, to teach us anything. I cannot remember Samson ever being invoked by the Rabbis as any kind of role model. Surely, Rabbi Soloveichik knows that traditional Jewish commentators sometimes invoke scriptural characters as negative, not positive, role models. As the Talmud puts it: "From the negative we can infer the positive."

The same problem arises when Rabbi Soloveichik invokes the scriptural commandment: "Destroy the very memory of Amalek from under the heavens" (Deuteronomy 25:19). Amalek, it will be recalled, was the first terrorist, killing Jews indiscriminately. In the Talmud there are three commandments regarding the Amalekites: 1) every adult Jew should call to mind what the Amalekites did when "they did not fear God" (Deuteronomy 25:18); 2) the narratives about the Amalekite crimes are to be read annually in the synagogue; 3) the Amalekites are actually to be destroyed. The first two commandments are easy to uphold: they involve scriptural texts that are to be publicly read and privately pondered. But, as for the third, who are the Amalekites now? Where are they to be found? What are we to do with them?

The fact is that the Talmud teaches that of all the ancient Near Eastern peoples, only the Jews survived the mass deportations conducted by the Assyrians before the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. Hence, there are no *real* Amalekites to be found any more, just as there are no *real* Moabites or Ammonites to be found any more. So, the most we can do with the narratives about the Amalekites is what the Talmud states about some other practically inoperative commandments: "Speculate about their meaning and be rewarded." This commandment is now theoretical, rather than literally applicable.

Thus it seems that the author of the book of Esther did not mean that Haman was a real Amalekite, but only "Amalek-like" when looked at in retrospect for what he *did*, not who he *was*. For this reason, his execution was a just penalty for his deeds, not a genocidal act related to his birth. Indeed, speculating about Amalek, Agag, and Haman might involve consideration of the spiritual dangers of any racially motivated hate (like that of Baruch Goldstein, the man who killed twenty-nine Arabs on Purim 1994, a man of whom Rabbi Soloveichik rightly—if too tepidly—disapproves).

Based on earlier talmudic sources, Maimonides ruled that if there are any Amalekites to be found, even they may eschew their evil heritage and adopt the Noahide laws (which can be interpreted as the talmudic version of natural law). If so, even they can be accepted as peace partners of the Jews, and even they can be accepted as permanent dwellers in the land of Israel. If the Amalekites are to be given the benefit of a doubt, then all the more so should the same benefit of a doubt be given to other enemies of the Jewish people who no longer seem, as the Talmud puts it, to be "still holding on to their ancestral practice." However, if these enemies prove themselves to not want to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors, and they engage in criminal acts against Jews (or others), then justice requires that they be fought and no further relations be sought with them. Here justice requires no forgiveness since there is no change of heart. But calling this pursuit of justice "the virtue of hate" simply confuses the issue, making a rational choice into an emotional reaction.

Here we get to the nub of Rabbi Soloveichik's essay. He despises Yasir Arafat. Some Christians have suggested to him—and to all Jews—that we should forgive Arafat for his crimes, even his latest crime of allowing suicide bombers to kill Jews and wreak havoc in Israel. On this point I agree with Rabbi Soloveichik. Arafat is despicable and never to be trusted again. I think the Israelis were wise, both politically and morally, to give Arafat the benefit of the doubt in their involvement in the peace process. One is to "offer peace" (Deuteronomy 20:10) to everyone—initially, that is. But since Arafat chose to "still hold on to his ancestral practice," Israel will have to find other Palestinian leaders to begin a new chapter in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

As for Christian love versus Jewish hate, there isn't as much of either as Rabbi Soloveichik seems to think. Yes, Christians are supposed to love their enemies, but that hasn't prevented Christians from rightfully engaging in "just wars" against their enemies. Yes, Jews do seek justice—even just revenge, which might look like hate. But that has not prevented Jews from hoping that our persecutors, indeed all evildoers, will repent and turn from their evil ways. Forgiveness can

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only be sought from one's victims and from God; hence living Jews should not forgive the murderers of dead Jews. We do not have the right to do so. Nevertheless, even murderers, if they repent before their just punishment in this world, are to be given the opportunity to become reconciled with God in the world-to-come, according to the Talmud. That is not to deny their just desert in this world, but that just desert is surely not the product of hatred.

As for the so-called virtue of hate, there is a well-known story in the Talmud that is told about another Rabbi Meir, a major figure in the Talmud, who lived at a time of great strife, both among Jews themselves and between Jews and gentiles. It seems that criminals living in this Rabbi Meir's neighborhood were making his life miserable. But instead of invoking the scriptural words, "Let the sinners perish" (Psalm 104:35), in his prayer for deliverance from them, he slightly revocalized the text, making it read: "Let sins be ended." In other words, he hated the sin, not the sinner. It is never too late for anyone to turn back to God and His law of justice and peace. Hating sin, then, is the only virtuous hatred. Any other hatred seems to be what the Talmud calls "baseless hatred." To presume otherwise is to defame Judaism by making it appear hating and hateful. That plays right into the hands of those Christian anti-Semites—who, thank God, have become fewer and fewer of late—who make insidious comparisons between a "loving" Christianity and a "cruel" Judaism.

In our public pronouncements, we Jews should seek to "find favor in the eyes of God and humans" (Proverbs 3:4), which means being faithful to our theology and teaching Judaism in a way that is ethically attractive. We should neither eschew justice in this world nor indulge hatred. About Judaism one can say—indeed, one should say—that justice is a virtue and, as the Talmud says, "one is not to be lenient in justice." Justice is the virtue of which Rabbi Soloveichik should have spoken, not hate—which is no virtue for anyone. Even when pursuing justice against murderers, we pray that they may cease doing evil. Between doing justice and praying justice be done, we have no time for hate.

David Novak
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada

Meir Soloveichik says that "to my knowledge not a single Jewish source asserts that God deeply desires to save all humanity, nor that He loves every member of the human race." Such a claim is patently absurd. In the Yom Kippur liturgy (from which Rabbi Soloveichik quotes) Jews throughout the world pray:

> And may you, with your abundant mercy, have mercy on us because you do not desire the world's destruction; as it is said, "for I desire not the death of him that dies"—the words of my Lord—"repent and live."

This seminal prayer, one of many such prayers, clearly states that while it is true that all individuals are responsible for their own sins, nevertheless God desires each sinner's ultimate salvation.

Furthermore, Rabbi Soloveichik's claim that no Jewish text asserts that God loves all of humanity is contradicted by numerous Jewish thinkers. Rabbi Moshe Cordevero in his classical work of mystical piety, the *Tomer Devorah*, contends that in the act of *imitatio dei*

> there should be no anger in man whatsoever. But there should be at all times vitality, good will, and great patience even to the unworthy. He should not be angry with those who offend him but he should be constantly willing to be appeased and desire to do kindness so as to please all.

In imitating God and His virtues, Rabbi Cordevero believes that humanity should desire to sustain love and "turn the other cheek" even to those "who do not deserve it at all."

These oversights on the part of Rabbi Soloveichik are indicative of a greater fallacy at work in his essay: the oversimplification and dumbing down of Jewish faith by essentializing it to fit one specific pattern. Rabbinic Judaism, by its very nature, is polyphonic. The give and take of the Talmud demonstrates that with rare exceptions it is impossible to assert that rabbinic Judaism "essentially" says anything. Rabbi Soloveichik does a competent job at presenting a specific read of selected Jewish sources. (Ironically, he seems to be following the tradition of Martin Luther, who saw Judaism as a hate-mongering religion, and Rabbi Meir Kahane, who saw hate as the basis for his theological and political outlook towards Palestinians.) Nevertheless, his inability to account for other voices leads to a potentially very dangerous view of what Judaism believes.

Far be it from us to contend that certain Jewish sources do not celebrate revenge, order murder, and command hate. However, in spite of this, Jewish sources from the Book of Jonah to the Rabbis of the Mishna, through the Maharal of Prague to Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, along with numerous modern Jewish thinkers, all place love of humanity and hate of hatred as the ultimate religious value. For these thinkers, the permissibility to hate someone is at most an exception to Judaism's general virtue of love. If hate is necessary, it is not a necessary virtue.

It seems that Rabbi Soloveichik decided to pick and choose his favorite Jewish texts. The question we pose to him is, Why are these your favorite Jewish texts? Why do you create such a monolithic voice of rabbinic Judaism, and why do you attempt to create an unbridgeable gap between the faith communities of Judaism and Christianity? Why do

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you look to separate these two Abrahamic faiths?

Ben Skydell
Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
New York, New York

Eliyahu Stern
Park East Synagogue
New York, New York

Meir Soloveichik's provocative article "The Virtue of Hate" succeeded in one way at least: it provoked this response.

However, it did not succeed in demonstrating a contradiction between Judaism and Christianity, because it did not present the Christian position adequately. I hope it also did not present the Jewish position adequately, because I hope many Jews would agree with the Christian position ethically even though they do not agree with it theologically.

Obviously, Jews who do not believe Jesus was the messiah do not believe what Christians believe about him: that Jesus became the scapegoat and the Passover "lamb of God" to atone for our sins, thus separating sins from sinners and enabling God and us to love sinners while hating sins. But they can still embrace the maxim to love sinners while hating sins, and to justify hating sins precisely by loving sinners, as doctors hate cancers because they love patients. ("Love" here, of course, is goodwill, not necessarily good feelings.)

This distinction between sinners and sins enables us to align our wills with God's in hating sins more than we are wont to do (How lukewarm and soft we are toward sin! How unlike God!) and loving sinners more than we are wont to do (How hard-hearted and impersonal we are toward each other! How unlike God!).

God does not forgive sins, He forgives sinners. He necessarily hates sins. Every sin meets its due reward: eternal condemnation, destruction, hellfire. Final refusal to repent of sin sends us to hell because it sticks us to sin like glue. We ride our sins to hell like the cowboy bombardier in *Dr. Strangelove* riding his bomb like a horse to nuclear Armageddon. Repentance is like a surfer "bailing out" on an unrideable wave, releasing his surfboard before he is wiped out with it.

Surely Jews understand that? If we hope for justice rather than mercy at the Last Judgment, we must have a horribly shallow view of God's holiness and of our unholiness. Thus it turns out to be Rabbi Soloveichik who is the sentimentalist, and the Christian who is the hard-headed realist.

We rightly give and receive justice, not love, in the workplace and in the public square, but not in the family. Surely this does not depend on whether Jesus is the messiah or not. The issue here is not whether Jesus is God but who God is. Is He our workplace boss, or our President? Or is He our Father? Surely Jews know the answer to that one. We Christians learned it from them. Have they forgotten it?

Peter Kreeft
Department of Philosophy
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Meir Soloveichik's defense of "The Virtue of Hate" is a welcome discussion of important differences between Christians and Jews. But he misses some of the subtle paradoxes connected with Christian forgiveness and love of enemies. Forgiveness is a two-way street and can be received only by someone who is repentant; the example given of Simon Wiesenthal's encounter with the dying SS Nazi might be a case in point. And St. Paul in Romans 12:20 brings out the paradox of loving your enemies: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him to drink. For in doing this you will heap coals of fire on his head." Nothing is so disturbing to the evil as to see transparent goodness in those they hate. One can imagine the entrance into the afterlife of a thoroughly evil person who can't stand the sight of the just souls, and who thrusts himself into the outer darkness (something like the case of the psychopathic murderer who if given a choice might refuse life imprisonment and prefer execution as less painful).

Howard P. Kainz
Department of Philosophy
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Meir Soloveichik notes that there is "no minimizing the difference between Judaism and Christianity on whether hate can be virtuous. Indeed, Christianity's founder acknowledged his break with Jewish tradition on this matter from the very outset: 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . . .'"

The question here is simple: Was Jesus in fact breaking away from Jewish tradition on this point? Yes. From the Jewish Scriptures? No. Jesus never used phrases such as "you have heard" or "it was said" in a way that implied the scriptural authority of the phrase "it is written." Neither in Leviticus 19 nor, to my knowledge, anywhere else in the Scriptures did God command His people to hate anyone.

John Harutunian
Newton, Massachusetts

Having studied biblical theology in graduate school (part of the time under a conservative Rabbi) and currently studying theology at the Pontificia Universita Gregorian in Rome as a seminarian, I regard Meir Soloveichik's biblical theology as unrepresentative of what the Hebrew Scriptures teach. For example, he rightly points out that Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'" (Matthew 5:38), but what he doesn't say is that there is a reason Jesus uses the expression, "that it was said" instead of his usual expression, "have

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you not read" or "as it is written" when he references scriptural passages. The answer is that nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures does the expression "hate your enemy" appear. The whole point of Jesus was to show the Jewish people that what the Pharisees were teaching about hating your enemy (the Romans and Samaritans at that time) was scripturally unsound. It seems nothing has changed in two thousand years. All the Scripture examples given by Rabbi Soloveichik have nothing to do with hating your enemy but rather with zeal for fulfilling God's commands, as well as the preservation of God's people.

What does appear in the Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly in different forms is the command to "seek good, and not evil, that you may live. . . . Hate evil, and love good" (Amos 5:14,15; cf. also Leviticus 19:17; Psalm 26:5; Psalm 45:7; Psalm 97:10). In other words, the Jewish people are called to hate the evil their enemies might do but not the enemy himself. Why? Because no matter how evil a person may be, he is made in the image of God and only God has the right to erase this image.

Avelino A. Gonzalez
North American College
Vatican City State

Meir Soloveichik's insightful and intriguing article "The Virtue of Hate" highlights those scriptural heroes who rejoice in the Lord's vengeance upon their enemies, such as Samson, Deborah, and Esther. However, I would like to know how Rabbi Soloveichik would interpret certain passages that have a contrasting emphasis.

Chief among them is Ezekiel: "But if the wicked man renounces all the sins he has committed, respects my laws, and is law-abiding and honest, he will certainly live; he will not die. All the sins he has committed will be forgotten from then on; he shall live because of the integrity he has practiced. What! Am I likely to take pleasure in the death of a wicked man—it is the Lord who speaks—and not prefer to see him renounce his wickedness and live?" (Ezekiel 18:21-23) Equally bold is the promise made through Isaiah: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). The clear sense of these passages is that, as long as one is in this life, it is never too late to turn from the path of wickedness, no matter how evil one's deeds.

Lawrence D. Goodall
Miami Springs, Florida

Meir Soloveichik suggests that Christians and Jews differ about the moral imperative to love the enemy because they have different assessments of forgiveness. Perhaps, or perhaps Rabbi Soloveichik's rejection of enemy-love stems from a failure to think through the implications of his own position on virtuous hatred.

We hate the wicked, says Rabbi Soloveichik, because of the evil things they do, things which "sever the bonds of brotherhood" between themselves and humanity. One wonders, then, why the objects of "virtuous hatred" Mr. Soloveichik lists are almost all also enemies of the Jewish people. If we hate only our enemies then certainly we do not hate disinterestedly, but for self-centered and illegitimate reasons. Does the mother mentioned in Rabbi Soloveichik's essay teach her son to hate Saddam Hussein for Saddam Hussein's own sake, because of the evil things he has done, or because Saddam Hussein as an Iraqi represents national interests in conflict with Israel's national interests?

Admittedly, reading the heart is difficult, but we need some test to distinguish virtuous hatred of evil from vicious hatred of our enemies. After all, if you hate those who hate you, what reward have you? Even terrorists do the same. The test of virtuous hatred, then, is the ability to hate our friends. If that mother wishes to inculcate virtuous hatred in her son, perhaps she should teach him to hate those who were responsible for the morally reprehensible act of intentionally bombing innocent German civilians in the city of Dresden during World War II. Virtuous hatred, like Christian neighbor-love, is impartial. That means the Jewish child taught to hate virtuously will learn to hate even his friends. And knowing to hate his friends, he will know also to love his enemies.

H. David Baer
Texas Lutheran University
Seguin, Texas

In "The Virtue of Hate" Meir Soloveichik makes a commendable effort to understand Christian as well as Jewish perspectives on how we should consider those whom we are tempted to regard as despicable and possibly beyond the pale of God's love. His descriptions of the talmudic passages wherein certain people are explicitly condemned to hell are certainly consistent with what C. S. Lewis calls the maledictory Psalms that, for example, bless those who dash out the brains of Babylonian babies (Psalm 9). But in trying to trace the roots of Christianity's opposite tendency to forgive even the most dastardly, Rabbi Soloveichik makes an error that is admittedly made even by many Christians.

He correctly identifies the crux of the matter as the question of who Jesus is. But then he entirely misses the point that Christians maintain, which is that Jesus the Christ came to impart his righteousness upon us, who cannot achieve it on our own. The closest Rabbi Soloveichik comes to "getting it" is when he says that "[t]he crucifixion is a story of a loving God seeking humanity's salvation, though it [humanity] never requested it, though it scarcely deserved it." The point is that humanity (meaning every one of us) does *not* deserve salvation at all. As Psalm 14 says, "There is no one who does good, not even one," and Paul quotes this Old Testament verse in his explanation in Romans 3 of why Jesus had to impart his righteousness to those who believe in him, because we have no righteous-

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ness of our own that is good enough to merit salvation.

At the end of the day, Rabbi Soloveichik's rationale for what he calls the "virtue" of hate is at least consistent with his description of Jewish theology. But I think the roots of the different ways that Christians and Jews approach this matter are not what he thinks they are. These roots lead to the question of whether man can truly obey and please God on his own, without the help and intervention of Jesus Christ. Being a Christian, I will not speculate on the fate of those who believe they can be righteous enough to please God without the help of Jesus. But speaking only for myself, I believe that without his death, resurrection, grace, and help, I would be lost.

Karl D. Stephan
San Marcos, Texas

I found Meir Soloveichik's discussion of the Jewish and Christian understanding of forgiveness both interesting and well informed. I think, however, that Rabbi Soloveichik's understanding of Christian forgiveness, while revealing familiarity with the New Testament, is still somewhat lacking. He rightly speaks of the Christian concept of grace, unmerited favor and forgiveness, which is based upon our faith in Jesus as Redeemer, as motivating and even commanding our forgiveness of our unworthy neighbors. It seems, though, that he sees this forgiveness as being divorced from justice, or the just punishment of the wicked.

In his discussion of prayer for an evil person, Rabbi Soloveichik misunderstands what I would consider to be the Christian view. When one prays for a Stalin, or Saddam Hussein (if one does; I can very rarely manage to), it is not to further or excuse their wickedness, but to plead for their repentance and for the will of God to triumph within and through them. It says in Romans 12:19-21, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." This may reflect the Christian emphasis on the justice of God being found in the new heavens and earth, rather than in this one.

Clare Richards Johns
Sewickley, Pennsylvania

If hate is a virtue, it is like no other. Meir Soloveichik contends that hatred is appropriate only when applied selectively in very limited fashion. Kindness and justice, on the other hand, retain their value whether administered in small amounts or with abandon. Although both Old and New Testaments encourage us to hate what is evil, nowhere in the Bible to my knowledge are we explicitly commanded to direct our hate towards individuals. The writer of Proverbs asserts that "hatred stirs up dissension"; the Israeli mother who raises her child to hate Saddam Hussein (as opposed to his heinous acts) is playing with fire.

Mark Schumack
University of Detroit Mercy
Detroit, Michigan

Meir Soloveichik replies:

Let me begin with the Bible. Many of my Christian critics assert that I distort Jewish Scripture by arguing for "the virtue of hate." John Harutunian insists that Jesus may have been "breaking away from Jewish tradition on this point," but not "from the Jewish Scriptures." Professor Peter Kreeft wonders whether we Jews have forgotten that God is our Father. Avelino Gonzalez, using language that I had hoped had gone out of fashion among Catholic seminarians, opines that "nothing has changed in two thousand years," and attempts to enlighten this Jewish author that "what the Pharisees were teaching about hating your enemy . . . was scripturally unsound." Mark Schumack finds in the Old Testament only an obligation to hate *what* is evil, and not to hate an individual *who* is evil.

Yet in the Hebrew Bible we find both righteous men and Almighty God hating terribly wicked individuals. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?" sings David in Psalm 139. "And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." A Christian may respond that David was only voicing his own wicked emotions, yet God Himself speaks thusly:

> I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. (Malachi 1:1-3)

Note God's choice of words. It is not only Esau's immoral actions that He hates: it is Esau himself. In 2 Chronicles, the Almighty adds that those who love the very wicked will be punished. God sent Jehu the seer to Jehoshaphat with the following admonition when Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, allied himself with King Ahab: "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." In insisting that we ought to love our enemies, it was Jesus, and not the Pharisees, who contradicted the Hebrew prophets.

And yet, asks Lawrence Goodall, do not Ezekiel and other prophets insist that God desires the repentance of the sinful? Of course; God's hatred, as I argued in my article, is very limited, "directed only at the most evil and unrepentant." This limited group is at times referred to by the Bible as those "that hate the Lord." God Himself informs us, in Exodus, that He is "a merciful and loving God"; but He will also wreak destruc-

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tion, according to Deuteronomy, upon "those that hate Me." It is only these "haters of God," David declares, that he too will hate. For God is the Father of both those who obey Him and those who betray Him, but not of those who hate Him.

Why ought we to hate those "who hate the Lord?" The answer lies in Judaism's insistence that in each human being lies the ability to choose the righteous path, and to eschew evil. Prof. Kreeft, tellingly, compares sin to cancer, and a sinner to a patient. It is this cancer, he argues, that will drag us to hell if we do not repent. Surely, he wonders, Jews understand this. The answer is that we do *not* understand this at all. Perhaps Prof. Kreeft sees sin as an illness that, like cancer, afflicts us with a condition that we never asked for in the first place. But Jews insist that sin is a state that only *we* can inflict upon ourselves, willingly and deliberately. The choice is our own: God, Moses instructed Israel, sets before us "life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Karl D. Stephan puts it rightly when he asserts that Jews believe that any human being "can be righteous enough to please God without the help of Jesus." The Jewish people were persecuted for centuries for this assertion; yet they refused to relent. For it is a basic tenet of our faith: no human being begins life stained by sin; one man's trespass did *not* lead to "condemnation for all," and so we do not need a savior to bring "righteousness for all." God leaves it in our hands to choose eternal life or eternal death; it is not our sins that drag us to hell, but rather *we* who send ourselves to hell by *choosing* to sin, and to sin egregiously.

To love Hitler, Jews insist, is to imply that it was not Hitler himself who chose to sin, and that we who chose differently are in some way no different than he. Such love is, Jews would argue, immoral, a denial of the Deuteronomic assertion that we can choose the righteous path on our own: "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off." Rather, it is "very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." And so we can celebrate the suffering of the egregiously evil who hate God, for it is they, and not their sins, that are ultimately to blame: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. . . . So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalm 58).

Having addressed the biblical view, let me now approach the rabbinic tradition. Rabbi David Novak writes that he cannot recall a single rabbinic source that considers Samson a positive role model. The fact is, however, that while the Talmud criticizes Samson's sexual sins, it also explicitly lavishes praise on the manner in which he protected Israel from its enemies. Let me cite several of these statements. The Talmud goes so far as to compare Samson to the Almighty, asserting that "Samson judged Israel in the same manner as their Father in heaven," and adding that "as the Holy One, blessed be He, shields the whole world, so too Samson shielded Israel during his generation." The Talmud further states that thanks to Samson's destruction of the Philistine fortress, for which he paid with his life, the Jews remained protected decades after his death, because "The Philistines feared [Samson] twenty years after he died, just as they feared [Samson] for twenty years of [Samson's] life." Perhaps it is this adulation that Maimonides had in mind when he referred to Samson, centuries later, with the glowing appellation *Shimson ha-moshi'a et Yisrael,* "Samson the savior of Israel."

Further, the Rabbis never refer to Samson's death as a suicide, nor is there any reason to describe it as such. A prisoner who destroys an enemy fortress, killing himself in the process, is not committing suicide, any more than a soldier who falls on a grenade to save his battalion is committing suicide. Indeed, according to rabbinic law, burial in a family plot is denied to suicides; yet the Midrash states that the patriarch Jacob, who prophetically foresaw Samson's life and death, prayed that Samson's dead body be quickly discovered, so that it could be buried in the grave of Manoah, Samson's father.

Additionally, Rabbi Novak's letter fails to address the passage from the book of Judges that I cite in my essay. But that passage is crucial, for Deborah the prophetess undeniably revels in the excruciating, well-deserved death of her very wicked foe. At the end of his letter, Rabbi Novak insists that Jews hope for the repentance of "all evildoers," even the most wicked. Yet rather than praying for their repentance, Deborah clearly wishes Sisera's fate upon his fellow evildoers: "So perish all your enemies, O Lord!" Moreover, rabbinic literature states in several places that this conclusion to Deborah's song was not composed by the prophetess, but rather was a product of *ruah ha-kodesh,* a divine inspiration that caused Deborah to conclude her song in this manner. This overt rabbinic approval alone serves to refute Rabbi Novak's argument.

In fact, the rabbinic view is fully consistent with, and is based upon, the view of the Bible. The Rabbis, like the prophets, distinguished between most sinners on the one hand, and the "haters of God," or wanton sinners, on the other. This distinction is reflected in the traditional Jewish liturgy, known as the *Shemonah Esrei.* Here are two of its blessings:

> . . . [A]nd return us in wholehearted repentance before you. Blessed are you, O Lord, who desires repentance.
>
> . . . May you speedily uproot, smash, cast down, and humble the wanton sinners—speedily in our days. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who breaks enemies and humbles wanton sinners.

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Yes, God loves the wicked—but not the frightfully wicked. Yes, God "desires the repentance" of the sinful—but not the wantonly sinful. Rabbi Novak argues that Jews ought to hope for the repentance of the egregiously evil; yet as a traditional Jew, he recites the above prayer *three times a day*. In fact, every rabbi cited by my Jewish correspondents—from Rabbi Meir of the Mishnah, to Maimonides, to Rabbi Moses Cordevero—recited these blessings, which ask God to return most human beings to Him in wholehearted repentance, but also to "uproot, smash, cast down" the wantonly sinful. If, as seems implied by his conclusion, Rabbi Novak prays for the wholehearted repentance of murderers like Osama bin Laden, or of Yasir Arafat, I wonder how he could ask God daily for the immediate destruction of the terribly wicked.

The fact remains that not a single source cited by my Jewish critics indicates that we are to love extreme sinners such as Stalin, or Hitler, or Pol Pot. Rabbi Novak cites the story of Rabbi Meir in the Talmud, who in the end prayed for the repentance of the petty criminals ("ruffians" is the Talmud's description) who lived in his area. Rabbi Novak concludes, wrongly, that Rabbi Meir would make no distinction between ruffians and the Hitlers of this world. Messrs. Stern and Skydell allude to the repentance of the sinners of Nineveh, as if the book of Jonah would make no distinction between Nineveh's sinners and Stalin. No one succeeds in citing a source stressing God's love of Haman, or of Ahab, or of Pharaoh. Meanwhile, a plethora of sources—biblical, mishnaic, talmudic, midrashic—indicate that while we do deeply desire the repentance of most, there are a few figures whom we are entitled, and obligated, to hate.

Finally, my Jewish correspondents resort to hyperbole. Rabbi Novak compares Samson, who devoted his life to protecting his people, to terrorists; I am compared to Meir Kahane; I am accused of "defaming" Judaism. Rabbi Novak is correct that both Jews and Christians "regard the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, in toto, as the word of God." Yet that should not prevent a vibrant argument about religious truth, with each faith respecting the right of the other to disagree.

Rabbi Novak concludes that we Jews "have no time for hate." Yet our sacred scripture informs us in Ecclesiastes that there is not only a time for love, but also "a time for hate." I would suggest that now is one of those times. We—Americans, Israelis, and other members of the free world—face enemies who cannot be deterred, haters of God who seek nothing but death and destruction. Adherents of the Christian faith may continue to love these enemies of the Divine, but as a Jew I believe that the bin Ladens of this world chose their path freely, and that, like David, we ought to "hate them with perfect hatred"—for they know well what they do.

The Discourse of Abortion

David Smolin's review of Hadley Arkes' new book, *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose* (February), disserves both the author and the readers of FIRST THINGS. Indeed, Professor Smolin wrote not a review, but an intellectual ramble that might have been titled, "David Smolin muses about the use and abuse of natural rights, with occasional references to someone named Hadley Arkes." Nowhere does he set forth the argument of the book, and on natural rights jurisprudence generally, he uses Arkes as a kind of foil for his own reservations—again, without ever delineating Arkes' position.

Prof. Smolin does not even delineate the ground of his own reservations. He implies, without quite arguing, that natural rights reasoning is a mischievous and fragile instrument—mischievous because it is sometimes put to perverse purpose; and fragile because it is apparently incapable of defending itself against misuse. The inference is that natural rights reasoning is insufficient to establish an enduring constitutional jurisprudence, much less one capable of protecting human life. Without something more, Prof. Smolin suggests, the enterprise in which Arkes and others of his kind are engaged is ultimately a feckless endeavor. But beyond a vague allusion to "getting things right on broader matters of culture," he offers not a clue about what that something more might be, by what means we might know it, or how it would cure the defects he sees in natural rights reasoning. There may be an argument in there somewhere, but Prof. Smolin doesn't make it; he merely insinuates it at Arkes' expense.

Prof. Smolin is troubled (as he should be), but also seems puzzled (as he should not be), about how American jurisprudence departed from the premises of the Framers and Abraham Lincoln. But anyone wishing to learn about the course of constitutional thinking from Lincoln to *Roe v. Wade* could hardly do better than to consult the collected works of Hadley Arkes. Few scholars in our time have shed more light on the fateful turn toward nihilist jurisprudence, or pondered more deeply what might be done about it. And, on life and death issues, no one has argued more persuasively or to greater effect.

As for the book itself, it is positively brim-full of cogent analysis on how *Roe*, *Casey*, and *Stenberg*, e.g., are the inevitable sequelae of relativist assumptions planted in the law a long time ago. On a theoretical level, *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose* is one of the most powerful statements on the necessity of recapturing a jurisprudence of natural right that I have ever seen. And on a practical level, it offers wonderfully shrewd advice, for those who will but ponder it, on how to use the opposition's premises against the opposition's argument.

None of this, however, is accounted for in Prof. Smolin's review, which snipes at (but never really engages)

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Arkes' general approach, while ignoring the specific content of his book altogether. Prof. Smolin is under no obligation to agree with Arkes, but he does have an obligation to get his argument right.

By way of full disclosure, I should note that Professor Arkes, in a gesture of undeserved generosity, dedicated his new book to me, which may prompt the thought that I write with a certain partisan interest. No doubt I do, but not for that reason. Long before we became acquainted, I learned why Hadley Arkes is one of the most important public philosophers of our time. His tireless efforts to revive a Lincolnian understanding of the American proposition are not a mere exercise in theoretical reasoning, but an eminently practical endeavor that has helped to shape pro-life litigation and legislation.

Natural Rights and the Right to Choose, among other things, contains a riveting account of Arkes' labors in the design and passage of the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, signed into law by President Bush last August. If ever a law may be said to bear the indelible stamp of a single mind, that was it; and the mind was that of Hadley Arkes. For Prof. Smolin to suggest that Arkes is somehow "digging joint graves for the nation and [the pro-life movement]" only goes to prove how little acquainted he is with the argument of the book or with the beneficial impact of Arkes' persuasive powers. I fear he has done Arkes not only a disservice, but an injustice.

Michael M. Uhlmann
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Claremont, California

David Smolin does a disservice to the readers of FIRST THINGS in his review of Hadley Arkes' recent book, *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose.* I take it that the first task of a reviewer is accurately to represent the argument of a book and then to propose pertinent criticisms. But the argument that Professor Smolin attributes to Arkes is nowhere in the book; and what Arkes does argue for never appears in Prof. Smolin's review—in fact, Smolin writes as if he is oblivious to it. This is regrettable, because Arkes' argument is of the greatest importance, especially for legal theorists such as Prof. Smolin.

According to Prof. Smolin, the argument of *Natural Rights* is that, through *Casey* and its aftermath, the pro-life movement has effectively been defeated, and that, therefore, the United States must inevitably decline and collapse. Smolin objects to this pessimistic view: "It is no time now for [the pro-life] movement to be digging joint graves for the nation and itself."

But that outlook is nowhere in Arkes' book, and I challenge Prof. Smolin to find passages that evince it. In fact, *Natural Rights* is a forward-looking, practical, and optimistic book. Arkes remains a convinced incrementalist in abortion politics: he recounts the battle over partial-birth abortion (still ongoing) as a "modest first step" away from the jurisprudence of *Roe*; in a similar vein he has hopes that the Born-Alive Act (now signed into law) might help to revive reasoned public discourse about the true character of abortion.

Arkes' description of his debate at Duke University on the Born-Alive Act hardly evokes an attitude of gloom-and-doom: "In the eyes of the audience I did indeed find wariness and traces of hostility. But those looks quickly gave way to a certain concentration as I set forth the logic of the problem, and people became engaged in the puzzle of the bill. Soon the hostility completely dissolved. . . . [O]ne young woman, who had worked for Senator [Jim] Jeffords and lobbied for Planned Parenthood, remarked that this bill sounded quite 'sensible' to her, and she would support it." But such would have to be Arkes' outlook: if indeed there are fundamental principles of natural law and natural right, discernible to the human mind generally (as Arkes thinks), then policies or practices that effectively deny these can only be supported for the short term, or in the long term only by continuing fraud and force. The philosophy of natural rights is by its nature optimistic—as even Prof. Smolin concedes at one point in his review, contradicting himself.

Embracing an apparent relativism and anti-intellectualism, Prof. Smolin writes: "Even if we immediately restored the preeminence of natural rights/natural law discourse to our national jurisprudence and politics, abortion rights activists would still find ways of justifying the abortion right in that mode of discourse, just as prior generations justified the enslavement of African Americans through invoking God, the nature of things, and the Bible." That's a perfect example of *ignoratio enlenchi* (argument from ignorance). Arkes agrees, precisely, that slavery and abortion can be defended in the "discourse" of natural rights; what he is concerned to assert is that the understanding of that discourse is destroyed by such defense—in our time as well as in Lincoln's. Arkes does much to demonstrate that the Founders had an understanding of that discourse which we ourselves generally lack; Prof. Smolin, in aiming to disagree with Arkes, inadvertently provides his own proof.

Michael Pakaluk
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Because I had already read Hadley Arkes' masterful *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose* before David M. Smolin's review of it appeared in FIRST THINGS, I was not disposed to accept Smolin's misleading account of the book. Other readers of FIRST THINGS, however, may not have had that good fortune. So, for their benefit, I offer the following.

First, Arkes is without peer in his proficiency in stringing together—with wit and wisdom—apparently

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disparate ideas, stories and concepts, thinkers and politicians, into a tapestry that is as elegant as it is compelling. Consider this exhibit, taken from the opening paragraph of the book's introduction as Arkes recounts a visit to the Holocaust museum:

> But then we took a turn, and we suddenly came upon a scene that must have been encountered by many other visitors to the museum: a vast vat filled with shoes. They were the shoes of the victims, collected by the Nazis, as they sought to extract anything they could use again or sell. And what came flashing back instantly, at that moment, were those searing lines of Justice McLean, in his dissenting opinion in the *Dred Scott* case: you may think that the black man is merely chattel, but "he bears the impress of his Maker, and is amenable to the laws of God and man; and he is destined to an endless existence." He has, in other words, a soul, which is imperishable; it will not decompose when his material existence comes to an end. The sufficient measure of things here is that the Nazis looked at their victims and thought that shoes were the real durables.

But in the hands of Professor Smolin, we are offered this scintillating comment: "Arkes believes in a rational discourse that can enumerate and build upon universal first principles." Second, Arkes' jurisprudence seems to be lost on Prof. Smolin, for he employs—without any sense of irony—many of the fallacies Arkes surgically dismantles in the very book about which Smolin has offered his opinion. Consider just one example from Prof. Smolin's review:

> While Arkes' portrayal of the proslavery position as based on moral relativism advances his argument, it ignores the fact that between 1830 and 1860 the South was awash in numerous natural law/natural rights theories that viewed slavery and white supremacy as consistent with both nature and nature's God. It is typical of natural law theorists that they see evil emanating from skepticism, while it is typical of skeptics that they see evil emanating from absolutes. Both can point to their own historical and contemporary examples.

Here's the confusion: Arkes proposes and defends the notion that natural law best accounts for our intuitions of equality and justice; Prof. Smolin responds by pointing out that people have believed evil things in the name of natural law. Arkes agrees, but that's precisely the point of his book, which Prof. Smolin simply does not get: when racists appeal to natural law to justify slavery and white supremacy they employ principles that undercut their own rights. In the same way, if we are, as the abortion-choice movement must assume, bearers of moral rights by nature (including the "right to choose"), then there can be no right to abortion, for the one who has the "right to choose" is identical to her prenatal self. Consequently, the right to abortion can only be purchased at the price of abandoning natural rights and replacing it with the will to power. Thus, to conscript Prof. Smolin for the purpose of understanding Arkes, "while it is typical of skeptics that they see evil emanating from absolutes," the warrant for that very judgment is one for which their skepticism cannot account. But if they insist on retaining their skepticism, then they are in no position to judge us wrong when we voice our disagreement with them.

But Prof. Smolin himself, in his assessment of Arkes' arguments, employs the resources of the natural law. For if he had truly grasped the position Arkes defends he would understand that his own judgment—that Arkes is mistaken at points—is itself dependent on moral notions not contingent upon relative circumstances or the contingencies of history. By claiming, for example, that Arkes has incorrectly interpreted the reasons for the Civil War and the debate over abortion, and has neglected to provide a fuller picture of the Founders and their beliefs, Prof. Smolin is presupposing a moral notion that is logically prior to his analysis: historical texts and events should be interpreted accurately. This, of course, is grounded in more primitive moral notions: to accurately interpret a text or event one should do so fairly and honestly, and one should pursue the truth while interpreting them. Both these moral commands are logically prior to, and thus not derived from, the events and texts themselves, for in order to extract truth from them, obedience to these moral commands is a necessary precondition.

Natural Rights and the Right to Choose is an important and sophisticated book that offers to us a careful and philosophically clear defense of "first things."

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David Smolin replies:

Michael Uhlmann, Michael Pakaluk, and Francis Beckwith read my review of Hadley Arkes' latest book as though it applied crude relativist arguments against Arkes' evocative natural law presentation. Thus, my historical statements about the misuse of natural law to defend slavery are characterized by Professor Pakaluk as relativist and anti-intellectual, while Prof. Beckwith states that I, as a relativist, logically should not even speak of historical accuracy. Prof. Uhlmann comes somewhat

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closer to the mark when he complains that I view natural rights reasoning as "fragile because it is apparently incapable of defending itself against misuse."

Regardless of the merit of my original review (which I will leave to the reader to determine), let me try to clarify my views. First, as a law professor responsible for numerous pro-life articles, amicus curiae briefs, and federal and state legislative testimony, I share Arkes' devotion to the pro-life cause. Second, I share Arkes' belief in the existence of natural law norms; I am not a relativist. I certainly understand that one does not disprove the *existence* or *truth* of natural law norms by noting instances where natural law has been misused to defend oppressive practices like slavery.

Accordingly, in the contest between Arkes and the typical abortion rights/relativist jurisprudence of the contemporary legal academy, I prefer Arkes. Indeed, I am grateful for the work Hadley Arkes does in refuting the skeptics, as well as being appreciative of his role in seeking incremental legislation like the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act. If I were writing a review in a forum read primarily by mainstream academics and lawyers, I would probably concentrate on my perception that Arkes gets the better of his argument with relativist, pro-choice jurisprudence. (Indeed, even in the review in question, I stated that "Arkes is correct that any theory of rights filled with as much irrationality, deception, and self-contradiction as that employed in defense of partial-birth abortion will be unreliable in defending liberty."

Most FT readers, however, share Arkes' views on abortion and the existence of natural law. For this audience, I wanted to share my reservations about Arkes' approach. I find Arkes' use of history troubling, because I think he over-attributes great historical wrongs to relativism. It will not persuade many skeptics to write about natural law and emancipation as though there is a single lineage from Aristotle to the Founders to Lincoln. To be credible, we must account for the parallel line of proslavery argument. This parallel line runs from Aristotle's defense of slavery as a natural institution in which some human beings ("the barbarians") are by nature suited to be slaves of others ("Greeks"); to the failures of the Founding generation regarding slavery, including the Constitution's implicit acceptance of slavery and the ownership of slaves by many who shaped the American tradition, such as Jefferson and John Marshall; to the Southern argument that nature, God, and the Bible demonstrate that "Africans" are "natural" slaves of "whites." It is not enough to disown the natural law lineage of this proslavery argument by demonstrating (as Prof. Beckwith does) its logical errors. Instead, those who would have us seek our jurisprudential salvation in the law of nature must account for how even the supposed masters of the tradition, such as Aristotle, Jefferson, John Marshall, and Southern theologians such as R. L. Dabney and J. H. Thornwell, could get it so wrong, both in theory and practice.

My point, then, is not that history proves natural law untrue, but rather that history shows that natural law is less *efficacious* than Arkes claims. Natural law concepts and methods often have failed to prevent individuals and societies from supporting and practicing large-scale social wrongs. The flaw lies (I argue) not in natural law itself, but in human nature, which is far more subject to self-deception, self-interest, and societal influence than Arkes' work suggests. Indeed, human beings are often more influenced by social and cultural norms and practices than by a felt inner need to conform to an Aristotelian principle of logical noncontradiction. Thus, I would view slavery as reflecting a societal disorder in relationship to class, economics, and race, and elective abortion as reflecting a societal disorder in relation to sexuality and the family. Since even the natural law tradition teaches that those living disordered lives often fail to discern and practice the truths of natural law, and since some within the natural law tradition (such as Calvin) echo my pessimistic perspective on human nature, my caveats to Arkes should come as no surprise.

This problem of the efficacy of natural law is strategically important to the pro-life movement. The movement's endlessly repeated mantra that abortion takes an innocent human life has won acceptance by the majority, without producing a similar acceptance for the corollary principle that *Roe* should be overruled and elective abortion made illegal. The pro-life movement needs to understand more accurately how differently situated people (legal, political, and cultural elites, women experiencing crisis pregnancies, the general public, the electorate) have come to hold what seem to be self-contradictory positions on abortion. Demonstrating the correctness of our views according to the canons of natural law logic will not suffice, if we fail to understand human nature well enough to change lives.

Arkes' over-optimism about the efficacy of natural law leads, I think, to an over-pessimistic assessment of America as having experienced a philosophical "fall" from its founding principles of natural rights into an unfortunate relativism. While I dislike the knee-jerk relativism often found in contemporary culture, my own view is that, in terms of adherence to the natural law, America has improved in some ways and declined in others. I also find that philosophical relativism is often superficial and hides (as one might expect) an innate sense of moral standards. This is what I meant by Arkes being too pessimistic: just because elites reject natural law principles, and embrace elective abortion, does not mean that the nation has gone to hell. Abortion is horrible, but so was the slavery practiced and countenanced by the Founders. Thus, a more balanced

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view of history and human nature would, I think, produce a less negative assessment of contemporary America *in relation to her past.*

I hope this clarifies my position, and I invite further dialogue.

The Court's Authority

I hesitate to challenge the wisdom or scholarship of such an eminent authority in matters constitutional as Robert P. George, and perhaps I have misunderstood what he contends in his article "Lincoln on Judicial Despotism" (February), but I got the distinct impression that he stated that prior to the Supreme Court's decision in *Cooper v. Aaron* (1958) it was an open question, never before decided by the Court, as to whether it had the final and binding (on everybody) word as to what the U.S. Constitution means and requires. In other words, whether it was "supreme," as its name implies, in the exposition of that document.

When I attended law school at Harvard in the years immediately preceding *Cooper v. Aaron*, the doctrine of federal judicial supremacy in the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution was so well accepted, so deeply embedded in the law, that the arguments of Southern lawyers at the time reviving long-rejected doctrines from the "ash can of history"—such as "interpositon," "nullification," and the views of Presidents Jefferson and Lincoln that the constitutional opinions of the legislative and executive branches of government were entitled to equal respect as to the agencies and matters within their jurisdiction—were regarded with bemusement, if not amusement. It was assumed that the chances of restoring to life these long-dead doctrines were nil, an assumption that proved correct in every case thereafter. In *Cooper*, it took the Supreme Court less than a page to dispose of the Little Rock School Board's broadest attack on the Court of Appeal's integration mandate.

Just from curiosity I consulted one of the first major treatises on constitutional law published not long after the conclusion of the Civil War, that of Judge Thomas Cooley (*Treatise on Constitutional Limitations*, 1871), to confirm my assumption that the Supreme Court had indeed expressed its supremacy in the field of constitutional exposition long before 1958 and that this was well understood by most lawyers both before and after the Civil War, despite Lincoln's musings on the subject. In this treatise (Vol. 1, pp. 25-37) Judge Cooley states clearly the principle of federal judicial supremacy, citing precedent too ample to repeat here. That principle and doctrine has never been questioned in any federal court since, so far as I am aware. Perhaps Professor George could enlighten me on the subject.

The views of Jefferson and Lincoln and, apparently, Prof. George also, with which I have some sympathy, have not prevailed, but were rejected early on. The doctrine of absolute federal judicial supremacy in constitutional interpretation is, as Prof. George points out, a crazy doctrine for a democracy, which claims that all power resides ultimately in the people. However, the chances of that doctrine being replaced by another anytime soon are those of a snowball in Hades.

Barton L. Ingraham
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Robert P. George has justifiably criticized instances of the Supreme Court's overreaching, but the remedies he proposes have their own problems. He suggests that, in agreement with Lincoln, Supreme Court decisions should be binding only on the litigants and not on other branches of the federal government, nor on other states, as the case may be. Does Professor George contend that any time the Supreme Court finds that a specific type of governmental action violates a citizen's rights, other branches of government and states not parties to the original case may continue these violations until they too are brought before the Supreme Court? For example, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), the Court struck down an Oregon law that effectively outlawed parochial education. Should other states have been free similarly to outlaw parochial education until they too had been individually dealt with by the Supreme Court?

Legal anarchy by the states and separate branches of the federal government is a poor solution to the problem of an overbearing Supreme Court. Moreover, making the Supreme Court powerless is hardly a guarantee of civil rights. A historic example would be the state of Georgia's persecution of the Cherokee Indians during the 1830s, in concert with Congress and President Andrew Jackson, and in violation of a Supreme Court ruling. As Jackson was alleged to have sneered, "Well, John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it." After witnessing the plight of the Cherokee firsthand on their "Trail of Tears," Alexis de Tocqueville sardonically stated, "It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity."

An assumption inherent in Prof. George's proposition is that our legislative and executive branches of government would interpret the Constitution as objectively and dispassionately as the Supreme Court, and maybe more so. I'm sorry, but that is, to say the least, not persuasive.

Gregory J. Roden, J.D.
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Robert P. George's "Lincoln on Judicial Despotism" raises questions for the practicing lawyer with a client to advise.

In our legal system, courts follow precedents. By their nature, then, courts are perhaps the most conservative of the three branches of government. The first question in any legal dispute is, "How have the courts ruled on this issue in the past?"

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Lawyers expect courts to continue to rule the same way on the same issues. Courts generally try to do so. Lower courts, at least, are bound by the hierarchical structure of the judiciary to follow precedents of a higher court. Even state supreme courts and the U.S. Supreme Court are reluctant to overrule themselves, and often will not admit it when they do.

The problem may be cast in a different way if we think of it as one of access to the courts. As long as parties are free to present a dispute in legal terms, courts will continue to make rulings. Under the precedential system followed in American jurisprudence, those rulings will be more or less binding on future disputes involving the same or similar issues. President Lincoln, as an attorney, knew this.

It would be interesting to know as a matter of history whether President Lincoln's desire to limit the binding force of *Dred Scott* ever found its way into a practical legal argument. Between the time of *Dred Scott* and the enactment of the Civil War Amendments, *Dred Scott* was the law. An executive or legislature might try to ignore it, but a slaveowner could seek relief in court, and the court would be bound to follow *Dred Scott*. Defiance of *Dred Scott* thus would be futile, as long as the courts were open.

Roe v. Wade, which Professor George mentions only at the end of his essay, is of course the real subject. How is *Roe* to be got around? Probably only through litigants' continued attempts to chip away at it—parental consent requirements, waiting periods, etc.—and careful appointment of future Justices. The birth control movement followed this course in the decades leading up to *Griswold v. Connecticut*.

The federal courts have "abstained" in certain classes of cases, notably those involving "political questions" (usually matters of foreign affairs) and what Justice Hugo Black called "Our Federalism." Why the courts should begin to abstain in abortion cases is not clear. Giving up this kind of power isn't easy.

Suppose a state wants to go all the way and passes a complete ban on abortion. Such action might be in keeping with President Lincoln's view of what the political branches can do—an alternative interpretation of the Constitution. A practicing lawyer, advising a legislative committee or governor, would predict the following: the law would meet immediate legal challenge and be struck down by a federal district court, which would be affirmed by the court of appeals. The Supreme Court, having no obligation to take any particular case, likely would deny a petition for certiorari, and that would be the end of it.

It would be the end, that is, unless the political branches were willing to ignore the judgment of the courts. This would bring the matter to a constitutional crisis, resolvable perhaps only by force, as at Ole Miss in 1962. The Civil War would seem to be evidence that such a crisis in interpretation can result in violence and more death. This possibility should be considered.

Bad law in a good system is better than no law at all. Self-correction by the Court is possible, if litigants demand that correction through bold and creative argument. We need new arguments, not defiance. If we're going to pick and choose which decisions we respect, then to hell with the whole thing.

Donald P. Boyle, Jr.
Alpharetta, Georgia

Robert P. George replies:

I am grateful to Barton L. Ingraham for his kind words. He wonders whether the Supreme Court's declaration of its own supremacy in constitutional interpretation in the 1958 case of *Cooper v. Aaron* was really anything new. It is a legitimate question. I myself suggested that it was not entirely new when I said in my article that the modern expansion of judicial power "may, perhaps, be conceived as having been expressed and ratified, rather than created, by the Supreme Court in *Cooper*."

Naturally, political institutions tend to take an expansive view of the scope of their own powers. Courts are no exception. At various points in our national history prior to *Cooper*, the Supreme Court had all but said that its rulings were binding on the other branches absolutely and without regard to the judgment of Presidents or members of Congress that the judges had exceeded their constitutional powers and were themselves acting in violation of the Constitution. Defenders of the Supreme Court's infamous pro-slavery decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, for example, advanced precisely this view of judicial power. That is why Lincoln perceived the need forcefully to rebut it in his First Inaugural Address. I would resist Mr. Ingraham's characterization of Lincoln's powerful critique of judicial supremacy as mere "musings" on the subject; but there is no denying that the doctrine condemned by the Great Emancipator has, in fact, prevailed in the legal profession and with the public at large.

A standard argument advanced by partisans of judicial supremacy is that the only alternative to tolerating the unrestrained judicial usurpation of democratic legislative authority is "legal anarchy." Defenders of the *Dred Scott* decision relied on this argument in Lincoln's day, and Gregory J. Roden now trots it out in his letter. It has not improved with age. Democratic politics is not anarchy. Nor would acceptance of the position favored by Lincoln, Jefferson, and other notable American statesmen "make the Supreme Court powerless." Why should we think that the judiciary must be either dominant over the other branches in every case or lacking any power whatsoever? As Lincoln recognized, these are false alternatives.

There is "an assumption inherent" in the final sentence of Mr. Roden's letter that the Supreme Court has

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over its history been "objective" and "dispassionate" in its interpretations of the Constitution. Having in mind the shameful jurisprudence inaugurated by the Court in *Dred Scott* in the mid-nineteenth century, *Lochner v. New York* in the early twentieth, and *Roe v. Wade* and numerous other partisan decisions in our own time, one might say: "I'm sorry, but that is, to say the least, not persuasive."

Donald Boyle raises some good practical questions. In thinking about them, we should bear in mind that Lincoln refused to accept the ruling of the *Dred Scott* Court that blacks—even free blacks—could not be citizens. In executing the laws of the United States, he treated people of African descent as citizens in open defiance of the Court's holding. This and other actions kept sustained political pressure on the federal judiciary. Had the matter not finally been settled by the Civil War and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, this pressure might well have resulted in a gradual dismantling of *Dred Scott*.

There is a lesson in this for those of us who are determined to undo the unjust and usurpative ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. I agree with Mr. Boyle that we should continue chipping away at it in litigation. And, of course, it is crucial to secure the appointment of judges who, in fidelity to the Constitution, will one day overturn it.

But in the meantime, it is also important to continue enacting legislation and keeping pressure on the Court by all constitutionally appropriate means. Nothing revealed the radicalism of *Roe* quite so dramatically as the Court's invalidation of a Nebraska statute prohibiting the grisly procedure known as partial-birth abortion in the case of *Stenberg v. Carhart*. Now we will have to see what the Court will do with the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act brilliantly conceived by Professor Hadley Arkes and enacted into law last year. Will the Justices throw the cloak of protection around infanticide to preserve the logic of *Roe*? They will be on the spot, especially if the Bush Administration proves to be creative and determined in pressing the legal implications of the Act when it comes to hospitals that allow the killing by exposure (or more direct means) of children who survive abortion procedures.

Permit me a final word about the Lincolnian rejection of judicial supremacy. Those of us who view the matter as Lincoln did do not say that the other branches of government should defy rulings of the Supreme Court in every case of disagreement. Statesmen must exercise prudence in these matters as in others. Distinctions must be drawn. Perhaps the most important is the distinction between a merely erroneous ruling and a usurpative one. Sometimes appellate courts operating within the proper scope of their powers get the outcome of a case wrong and import into the law an erroneous principle. Ordinarily, the courts must be left to correct the error themselves. It is not appropriate for the other branches to treat such decisions in the way Lincoln thought *Dred Scott* should be treated. What justifies Lincoln's position on *Dred Scott* is that the ruling in that case was more than merely erroneous. It was a gross usurpation of the authority of the people acting through their elected representatives. The Court was acting unconstitutionally by claiming for itself powers it had in no way been granted by the people through their instrument, the Constitution. For the President to treat such a decision as a rule binding on him as a matter of principle would be to acquiesce in the usurpation and fail in his own sworn duty to uphold the Constitution.

A Clarification

I refer to the brief mention of my biography, *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc*, in your February issue (Briefly Noted). The assertion that Chesterton and Belloc "were not as close as Shaw, and Joseph Pearce, suggest" is best answered by Chesterton himself—in the words of an entire chapter dedicated to Belloc in his autobiography, entitled "Portrait of a Friend"—and, of course, in the immortal "lines to a Don (who dared attack my Chesterton)" by Belloc. Those who like Chesterton while disliking Belloc might wish to think that they were not as close as they indubitably were. Wishful thinking is not, however, any substitute for reality.

Joseph Pearce
Writer-in-Residence
Ave Maria College
Ypsilanti, Michigan

The Continuing Crisis

My thanks to Richard John Neuhaus for a generally balanced assessment of past, present, and future ("Boston and Other Bishops," Public Square, February). Thanks especially for the honest statement that "Cardinal Law brought down Cardinal Law." It was not the press, anti-Catholicism, or any other outside force. Had churches and their spiritual leaders behaved responsibly and faithfully all along, people would not have been injured. Failing that, in this sinful world, at least the institutions would not have stonewalled and deepened the injuries people suffered at the hands of clergy.

I write as a United Methodist pastor, currently a district superintendent, who had to deal with a recently disclosed, forty-year-old case of sexual misconduct in one of the churches in my district. My predecessor in the 1960s stonewalled, denied the misconduct, and then hastily removed the offending pastor (married with children) to another assignment. I am thankful that our bishop insisted that I offer counseling to the identified victim-survivors and that I meet with church members concerned with the abusive acts and their coverup—a very poorly kept secret over the years. I hope our belated institutional honesty and attempt to provide some restorative justice

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demonstrated faithfulness, even four decades later.

Father Neuhaus is right. None of us can hurry the healing, reconciliation, and moving on until we accept our responsibility for faithfulness to God, and to the people of God. The truth will set us free, but first it will hurt—a lot.

(The Rev.) Jeanne Devine
Hutchinson District
Superintendent
Kansas West Conference
United Methodist Church
Hutchinson, Kansas

I found Richard John Neuhaus' Public Square column in the February issue most thoughtful. I agree that what he calls "clericalism" is not only a proximate, but a longstanding corruption that has caused much damage. I have been saying this to anyone who will listen and I have been proclaiming the odd kerygma "It's the Theology, Stupid" to anyone liberal or conservative who will give me the time of day. Most people seemed puzzled or bemused by my comments. I want to suggest that the misshapen theology noted by Father Neuhaus comes in part from not listening to the great reformers—Luther in particular—carefully enough (for example, brushing aside his keen insight about "both saved and sinner"). Perhaps "It's the Anthropology, Stupid" would be the more precise formulation. We Roman Catholics pay too little attention to the Fall—which Cardinal Newman aptly called an "aboriginal calamity." Perhaps if we more clearly understood the extent of our damage (e.g., understanding that "and God saw that it was good" refers to the prelapsarian world) we would be more on our guard and less "shocked." I confess that there has been a lot of cheap grace floating around Boston for a long time and the consequences should not be surprising.

Robert Alpert
Yenching Institute
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

With all the talk about Catholics leaving the Church because of the crisis, I'd like to go on record as one ex-Catholic for whom the crisis has been the occasion to return to the Church. By my attitudes and actions in the 1960s and 1970s, I was part of the problem. And then I left the Church. Now, by God's mercy and grace, I've been able to come back. Not too late to make amends, I hope. I pray He will confirm me—and all of us—in fidelity, to become part of the solution.

Karen Winterburn
Glenview, Illinois

Maritain's Cry

I read with great interest Richard John Neuhaus' piece on Jacques Maritain and *The Peasant of the Garonne* (Public Square, January). Like Father Neuhaus I am a convert to Catholicism; but unlike him I came to Maritain *from* the *Peasant of the Garonne*. I encountered Maritain in this his last book while studying for the Episcopal ministry in 1969. I then worked backward to his writings on St. Thomas and aesthetics. I remember the negative reviews of the *Garonne* when it came out, especially in Catholic circles. But I did not see any inconsistencies between what Maritain had written in his earlier writings and what he wrote, albeit with a hard edge, in the *Garonne*. I realized, as a non-Catholic at that time, that something had gone very wrong in the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. My reading of the *Garonne* in 1969 was much the same as Fr. Neuhaus' in 2003. *The Peasant of the Garonne* is a cry: a cry of exultation and hope based on what the Second Vatican Council seemed to promise; and a cry of impassioned warning against those who, in the name of *aggiornamento*, denied transcendence, and who took and are still taking the Church to a place locked within this world.

The Peasant of the Garonne is also a cry of anger, an anger that I share as a Catholic priest today, an anger that is sadness—what Romano Guardini called "la tristezza cosí perenne," the sadness that dwells in the heart of every Catholic priest who loves the Church. For Maritain, as for me, the heart of the sadness lies in the desacralization of the liturgical life of the post-Vatican II Church. The heart of Maritain's anger in the *Garonne* is directed at what happened to the celebration of Mass in the "anything goes" mentality of the sixties and seventies. But Maritain did not foresee the institutionalization of mediocrity that is the current situation. It is a situation of not only institutionalized liturgical mediocrity, but also the incorporation into the celebration of Mass of the worst of American religious sentimentality—a conflation of forced folksiness with the unctuousness of the therapeutic jargon and mentality.

Until the liturgical life of the Church is fixed, the potential of what Fr. Neuhaus still calls the "Catholic moment" will never be realized. The same holds true for the Pope's call for the evangelization of the world and the re-evangelization of the West. They are dead in the water while the liturgy is in the bonds of secularism and sentimentality. It is a time to sing "by the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept." But it is also a time to remember and to celebrate the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church of Christ.

(The Rev.) Richard G. Cipolla
St. Mary's Church
Stamford, Connecticut

Causation or Correlation?

Richard John Neuhaus notes that the decennial study of church membership conducted by the Glenmary Research Center and sponsored by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies has confirmed the phenomenon highlighted in Dean Kelley's 1972 *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (While We're At It, January). The phenomenon is that, by and large, the growing churches are those that we ordinarily call conservative, while most of the

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declining churches are moderate or liberal. Father Neuhaus explains this phenomenon by asserting that "people are attracted to churches that offer clear teaching and require a high level of commitment."

But causation is harder to prove than correlation, and Peter L. Halvorson and William M. Newman of the University of Connecticut have extensively documented another factor that has undoubtedly played a major role in the growth of conservative churches, namely, demographics. In their *1776-1990 Atlas of American Religion* (Altamira, 2000), Halvorson and Newman document what we all know, that many people move to the South and West when they retire. When they do, the authors point out, many will leave the large liberal or moderate mainline churches that Fr. Neuhaus likes to say are rapidly becoming sideline churches. When these people arrive in the South, however, they usually cannot find a liberal or moderate congregation in the local area, or at least not one large enough to offer the range of services they are accustomed to. Desiring that range of services, and wanting to meet friends in their new place of residence, they often join a fairly large, local congregation—which, in most cases, will be more conservative than their former church.

And yet—at least to my knowledge—most growing churches in the North today are what is generally called conservative. So there must be many factors involved: demographics, a consumer mentality, congregation size, pastoral style, emphasis on mission and outreach—as well as the explanation favored by Kelley and Fr. Neuhaus.

Philip J. Secker
Storrs, Connecticut

Dealing with Sin

In February's Public Square (While We're At It), Richard John Neuhaus responds to a *Christianity Today* article by a married ELCA parish council member and youth group leader who discussed his desire to be able to share with his church his struggle with a homosexual inclination. This anonymous author recognized homosexuality as sinful and wanted the support of his local church community as he continued to overcome it. Father Neuhaus compares this man's struggle to that of a hypothetical fellow church member tempted to betray his wife by sleeping with his secretary. I believe that is a very fair comparison, but then Fr. Neuhaus goes on to ridicule the idea of this man telling "the congregation about his temptations, seeking their understanding and acceptance." He concludes by saying the anonymous man struggling with homosexuality should just keep his problems to himself.

I think Fr. Neuhaus has seriously misunderstood how a local church can help believers deal with sin. Neither of these men—the anonymous homosexual and the hypothetical heterosexual—should discuss their current sexual struggles with the fourth grade religious education class. Most likely they shouldn't be brought before the entire church during a Sunday service. But both of these men should feel free to seek support and prayer from some members of their church. I feel it would be especially appropriate to bring this up with anyone they served next to, such as fellow parish council members or youth group leaders. What use is the local church if its members cannot seek accountability and help from fellow parishioners as they face serious temptations in their lives? A parish has failed if Christians who have worshiped and served together for years can't share their struggles, including their struggles with serious sexual sin, with each other.

Ryan Larson
Seminarian
Mundelein Seminary
Diocese of Joliet, Illinois

RJN replies:
Surely Mr. Larson is right that the man in question should be able to find in his local church those who can help him with his struggle against temptations. What I criticized was the view that he should make his temptations public, apparently to the entire congregation.

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Opinion

The Necessary Mother

Sibyl Niemann

The baby was extra clingy today. At eighteen months, Monica has just this week cut two of her three emerging molars, which had been bulging and sore for weeks. She did not want to be put down and kept coming to grab my legs as I tried to make sandwiches for the older children, unload the dishwasher, fold laundry. Every time I nursed her, she looked intently into my face, willing me to quiet myself, unwind my attention from the rest of life, and give her the one thing in the whole world that no one else can give: my undivided, loving attention.

But today was a hard day. Last night I'd stayed up much too late reading (one of the habits of my pre-motherhood life that I have not been quite willing to give up), and got up several times to comfort Monica after the Tylenol wore off around 2 A.M. All morning the children quarreled, and mediating between the irrationality of three-year-old Jonah and the legalism of five-year-old Abigail had just about done me in. Of course, then there was the Trouble with the Fruit Drawer, which entailed moving the entire refrigerator just to get the door closed again. No amount of coffee helped me today.

By three this afternoon, as I drove over to pick up Abigail from kindergarten, I was neck-deep in self-pity. Why did I think that this was what I wanted? What was so bad about wearing panty hose and working for pay? Wasn't I accomplishing more? So much of my day is taken up with triviality, frustration, and minutiae!

When I got home I realized I'd forgotten to take the meat out of the freezer. Then the cat threw up. But I did give Monica some more baby Tylenol, so that was good. And I did get a chance to brush my hair.

It is enormously difficult to talk about how we raise our children these days. How children should be raised, and by whom, are key questions to any discussion of the renewal of culture, but just try bringing up the debate about stay-at-home mothers versus "working mothers" (by which is meant women who work outside the home, leaving the child care to others). Usually it is impossible to get as far as real discourse, because like politics and religion, it matters deeply to us all, and we are, therefore, defensive and cautious.

First, who is the "stay-at-home mother"? Well, the "mother" part means the married woman with babies or small children. The "stay-at-home" part means that she is their primary companion, teacher, and nurturer, watching after them a large majority of the time. Although she may occasionally leave them with someone else, it is her main job during the day. (True, some fathers stay home full time—or split the task with their wives—to raise their small children until they are school age, but since this is still so much the exception, I will stick with "mother," noting that fathers can fulfill this role too.)

Now—before continuing—I am not condemning those parents who must, through force of circumstance, put their children in day care. Single mothers cannot help having to work; neither can the families that would experience complete financial ruin if both parents did not earn a paycheck. But in my middle-class experience, this is rarely the situation. These parents freely choose the two-income lifestyle, and thus full-time day care for their children, for personal reasons, and it is those reasons that fuel the debate.

But be that as it may, if our society is to be revitalized, the committed, religious, stay-at-home mother will have to be at the forefront, because society truly does begin at home. The Christian worldview recognizes all people as brothers in Christ, proclaims that where two or three are gathered in his name he is present, and demands preferential treatment for the weak, the defenseless, and the vulnerable. The committed stay-at-home mother has the best chance (and the most time) to proclaim this to her small children each day as she feeds them, bathes and clothes them, reads to them, works with and for them. She proclaims with her mouth what she herself performs, however imperfectly.

This is not to say that families with two full-time salaried parents cannot inculcate a Christian worldview. They can and some do. Yet I cannot help feeling that this way is less efficient, all things being equal, and in the long run less than ideal for children and families.

My suspicion is that a good number of people still agree with this thesis, but a minority put it into practice, and an even smaller minority would openly advocate it for others. Why? In a word, because staying at home with small children is very, very hard: sometimes "battle" is not too strong a word for this life. Perhaps it would be helpful if those still willing to advocate full-time mothering would ponder just what makes it so difficult.

One of the hardest parts is the loneliness. Last summer the kids and I spent a lot of time at the local playground. Because there are no basketball hoops or tennis

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courts, it is a good place for moms to bring their younger children. It has big old trees around it and a few uncomfortable new benches. Most of us sat at the edge of the sand, taking rocks out of the babies' mouths and hollering at the bigger kids to be careful. I suppose we were all about the same age, early- to mid-thirties.

Amid the chat about the weather (a perpetual topic in Minnesota, even in the summer), movies, and house renovations was a conversation I have heard many times in essentially the same form:

"It's so nice for my kids to have other kids to play with," said one woman.

"You know," said another, "when I was growing up, we didn't have to go to parks very often. We just ran around the neighborhood."

"Yeah," said the first one. "Same with me. My mom just opened the door and we all ran outside, even little ones, four or five years old. We had all kinds of friends on the block and we played outside all day. And all the moms watched out for all the kids. It was safer then."

"It was a different world," I said.

All of us nodded, but no one said what everyone was thinking: it would be at least marginally safer in our neighborhood if there were more parents around during the day.

Neither did anyone point out that fewer women our age are having children, and when they do, those kids are in day care all day long. It was easy to see that we all missed that camaraderie for our children. But it was also painfully clear that these women, just as much as I, missed that sense of community for themselves. It is hard to be so isolated so much of the day. While a person can always get into her car and go somewhere, I find myself wishing for someone to say hello to as I rake leaves. It would be nice, if I got locked out of the house, to have a neighbor who could lend me her phone.

If loneliness is one of the hardest parts of this life, then a sense of futility is right up there too. Everyone who has cared for small children knows how frustrating it can be to get to the end of the day and think back on what has been accomplished. True, the stay-at-home mother often gets a lot of things done during the day, her children's needs permitting, but it all begins to look so, well, pointless. Why clean off the towering end-table clutter when it will be back again in two days? Why go to the effort to cook good food when it will be gone in fifteen minutes and, in the case of the children, might occasion unpleasant protests? What earthly good does it do to be here at home when nothing I offer pleases Jonah, when I cannot pitch a baseball well enough to get it near Abigail's plastic bat, and when I am so distracted by the noise and chaos that I find it hard to complete a sentence? At least at my old job outside the home I occasionally accomplished *something*.

Then there's the problem that comes to mind as I teach awkward Jonah how to put on his shirt (which is harder than you might think when you've never done it before). The average middle-class woman has some higher education, not to mention skills acquired on the job. What will become of all that education (which I am still paying for) once its potency has been depleted by lack of use? Many women need to keep up their skills in order to go back to the workplace, and especially for those women who plan to have only one or two children—in other words, most women in the middle and upper classes—the temptation to keep the skills by continuing to work outside the home is almost irresistible. And working at home, for many people, is a lot harder than it seems, because of children's unpredictability. Even small projects must be accomplished in tiny bites of time: ten minutes here, half an hour there, usually after the kids have gone to bed but before one's own exhaustion wins out. (It took me a month to finish this essay, for example, although I probably did not spend more than eight hours altogether in the writing.)

Then there's the money. Our culture no longer values the household supported by a sole breadwinner. Everything—from buying a house to applying for a college loan for one's son or daughter—seems structured around the two-income family. For example, my husband has a job that pays almost twice the median income in our area for a family of four. Yet when we began looking for larger houses last year, what we qualified to borrow would not buy more than two bedrooms and one bathroom in most of the city, and certainly not in our parish neighborhood. We wanted to buy there because it was safe, with a church, grocery store, library, and post office within walking distance (thus making it unnecessary to have two cars). In the end, we found just the right house—big enough for our growing (and, by the grace of God, large) family—but in a different parish, in a second-tier neighborhood (lots more car theft and somewhat more drug trouble), half a block from a major thoroughfare. This is not a complaint, because whenever I tell acquaintances what we paid for our house (we borrowed at absolutely the top of our range) they are envious. God blessed us with this house and, by extension, with this parish and school.

But not everyone earns as much as my husband. However much women may want to stay at home with their children, they may not be ready to make the sacrifices that it requires. Understandably, they may not be willing to move into a smaller house, in a less desirable location, or to go without a second car, or to give up vacations, eating out, and going to movies.

One final sacrifice involved in staying at home is that it can be—what can I say?—incredibly boring. To mention but one example, there is the difficult

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stage that children seem to hit at about age three. I call it Narration. Jonah is currently there and shows no signs of moving on. For those who may not recognize it or whose children skipped over this stage, moving straight from Inquisition to Sulkiness, this is the time during which the child tells stories. Jonah tells stories about the videos he watches. He tells stories about mountain lions, about David and Goliath (in which David's victory is retold and embellished in the most excruciating detail), and about playing baseball. He runs around the house narrating. He narrates on the potty.

Now these are sweet stories, full of cute malapropisms. But after *months* of constant chatter, I am bored. It is hard to evoke enough enthusiasm to respond appropriately. ("Wow, honey!" no longer cuts it, now that Jonah is almost four; he wants "And what did David do with the catcher's mitt after Goliath threw it on the ground?")

Boredom is a common objection that many women raise against staying home. They cannot imagine how anyone could stay interested, with no other adults around for eight hours, no real participation in society at large except through commerce and TV.

The fact is, it can be difficult. It seems peculiar to our time that we have so many more ways to amuse ourselves, and so much more time in which to do it. As the average age of American first-time mothers increases, so do the years in which women are independent adults, working but in most cases unencumbered. Pleasing yourself, setting your own routines, always seeking what is interesting—these things aren't necessarily sinful. But they are hard to give up. We have so little experience in enduring boredom for the sake of someone else's good.

I don't know how to solve these problems for other women. It seems useless to protest that, despite everything, staying at home can be a reward in itself. How to persuade someone else that my growing satisfaction with my occupation is anything more than a quirk of my personality?

Yet I wish I could convey it. Like so many other full-time mothers I have learned the obvious: for my children, not just anyone will do. Even the best teacher, the kindest day care worker, cannot replace me, my attentive presence. No matter how closely someone may agree with me and my husband, she cannot guide and nurture our children as we can. No one else can *parent* our children. It is God's gift to me and to John, ours alone.

If we care about how our country's children are raised, and who raises them, I think this point is where we have to start. And may He who turns the hearts of the fathers toward their children bless all parents, in all walks of life. It is the toughest job we'll ever love.

Sibyl Niemann *and her husband are expecting their fourth child in September.*

Three Meanings of Secular

Douglas Farrow

It is said that we live in a secular society. But what is meant by "secular"? All relevant usages of the word, deriving as it does from *saecularis* (of an age, or of a generation), point to a concern with the affairs of our time, as opposed to some other; to a concern with this world of ours, as opposed to some other. But a great deal hangs on the nature of the contrast. There are, I believe, three possibilities, two of which have considerable currency today, one of which does not. I will call them the supersessionist, the liberal, and the eschatological. Or, if you prefer, the immodest, the falsely modest, and the genuinely modest.

The supersessionist or immodest approach implies a contrast between eras, an essentially negative contrast generally associated with nineteenth-century antireligious humanism. Here the "secular" is defined over against the "religious" in much the same way as late Renaissance and early Enlightenment thought was defined over against the thinking of the so-called Dark Ages. Darkness gives way to dawn. Priestcraft gives way to science. Religion gives way to reason ("the very voice of God," as the Rev. Benjamin Whichcote put it already in the seventeenth century). Secularization, intones the sociologist, is the process by which religious ideas and institutions lose their public significance. Secular principles are those that operate without any appeal to religious beliefs or justification, that indeed are uncontaminated by any such beliefs or justifications.

Although the supersessionist definition is still widely employed in Western society, and is often implicit or explicit in the language of the media, the academy, and even the courts, it has many difficulties. Not the least of these is the disconcerting persistence of religious ideas and practices even in "enlightened" cultures. Religion in the West is far from moribund, even where it is in turmoil or distress. But I have not described the supersessionist view as "immodest" merely because it is inclined to exaggerate its own success. Its immodesty runs deeper than that.

Consider the contribution of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Like Thomas Hobbes, Rousseau rejected the medieval doctrine of overlapping ecclesiastical and civil authorities. Yet Rousseau rejected Hobbes' substitute, which assimilated church to state, because it could not ensure the state's supremacy to the Church. Rousseau thus proposed a solution that would eliminate the competition between the two once and for all. His first move was to

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redefine the spiritual realm, from which the Church purported to derive its authority, in such a way as to render it politically impotent. The spiritual and the political, the eternal and the temporal, were henceforth to be held apart by the repelling force of a powerful dualism. The spirit or the conscience might belong to God, but the body would belong to the state.

To say the least, this was a curious take on Jesus' saying, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." It gets worse, however, for Rousseau believed that the state—if it is to claim and to hold the allegiance of the people—must itself provide some form of bonding backed by theological and legal sanctions. He therefore called for a civil religion that he hoped would do just that. Revolutionary France experimented with such a religion during the days of its triumph over the Church, an experiment that proved in its immodesty to be the debacle any sane person might have predicted.

Supersessionism, in subsequent incarnations, has tended to shy away from religious aspirations, civil or otherwise. In the West it is usually deemed enough simply to resist any attempt by organized religion at a political resurrection. Occasionally, however, especially in the East, a still more militant supersessionism has substituted for religion an oppressive ideology of state authoritarianism such as that which created the infamous Gulag Archipelago. But such immodesty, though secretly or openly admired by some Western supersessionists, has always proved to be self-destructive. The state that exalts itself "above every so-called god" is bound to fail, and to fail dramatically.

The second, "liberal" approach owes more to John Locke than to Hobbes or Rousseau; more recently, it is deeply indebted to John Rawls. It still works with a negative contrast between eras: the past world, with its putative "wars of religion," and the present world, which is ever so much more peaceful—or would be, if only religious people at home and abroad would catch up with the Enlightenment. Moreover, it also assumes a sharp dichotomy between the spiritual and the material, as between the private and the public. Yet it is distinct in a number of ways.

For the liberal, a secular society may be proud of its different cultures and religions. Liberalism is not in principle against religion, nor has it lost all interest in religion. Rather it *is* interested in religion, albeit in a disinterested way. Above all, it is committed chiefly to the cultivation of tolerance—the one remaining virtue that strives, in valiant combat with Nietzsche's Will to Power, to govern all values—so that everyone may be free to pursue whatever he or she happens to believe makes for peace and happiness, whether in this world or the next.

Like a neutral referee, such a society's aim is simply to observe and to regulate the competition between the religious and the nonreligious, refusing to take sides with this or that worldview or way of life, but making sure that there is some kind of space for adherents of each. In a liberal society the state and its functionaries have no mandate to deliver us from the seductive power of religion, nor yet to create a religion that serves the state, but only to maintain a just peace, an essential equality; which means, in practice, to enforce tolerance. Thus, for example, in the face of differences over the education of its youth, its officials will be instructed to take no decision that rests upon religious reasoning, or that cannot be justified without reference to some creed or other. Put positively, their task is to establish policies that enfranchise the disenfranchised, without endorsing specific community values or counter-values (on human sexuality, say, or on worship of God or gods).

The modesty of this view is at first glance obvious. It is so modest, in fact, that it is doubtful whether it can possibly sustain itself. Where is the mutual binding, the *religare*, in the pursuit of a "justice" or an "equality" or a "liberty" or a "peace" that has no definite end or object, no historic content, and no particular measure except tolerance? No society, nor any state, has ever yet attempted to rest itself on so meager a basis for union, or for unified action.

At the end of the day such a society is no society at all; it is merely a disparate collection of quite distinct societies competing for limited resources. Insofar as this disparate collection is held together by liberal ideals, it is not held together *as* a society but *in spite of* its societies. And it is not at all clear why this particular collection of societies should attempt to coexist within a single governmental or legal structure. The logic of liberal secularism is thus at odds with itself.

But why describe this view as *falsely* modest? Because it conceals a whole series of metaphysical commitments that compete with those of ordinary religions and religious philosophies. It has been noted, for example, that the doctrine of "liberal neutrality" detaches the pursuit of justice from pursuit of the good. That is, it detaches means, which are public (the state's distribution of resources, including "the social bases of respect and dignity"), from ends, which are private. In this way public actions can be justified independently of any particular—and, as such, sectarian—idea of the good, which is said to be necessary if the problem of pluralism is to be solved. Yet to sever the bond between justice and the good entails the reconstruction of both concepts; perhaps even the equating of the liberal concept of justice *with* the good.

"Liberal neutrality" is thus the product of a comprehensive (though not necessarily a coherent) worldview and so is not neutral at all. As Oliver O'Donovan remarks in *The Desire of the Nations*: "The false self-con-

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sciousness of the would-be secular society lies in its determination to conceal the religious judgments that it has made." Indeed, liberal secularism conceals a deep antipathy toward its competitors. Its "pluralism" is a cover for hegemony. It has taken to heart the negative article of Rousseau's own political creed—that intolerance is the one thing which must not be tolerated—and learned to deploy this article against those with firm convictions about the good that differ from its own.

The third approach to secular society—the eschatological—derives from the Jewish and the Christian conviction that we must contrast ourselves not so much to the era that preceded us as to that which is yet to come. This is not to be confused with utopianism, nor with a doctrine of manifest destiny, whether national or global, nor with a theocratic theory of the state. All such theories give to the state both too much and too little. Too much, because they mistake some formal feature of social life in the *saeculum*—for example, the rule of law, or the advance of democracy, or the triumph of techno-capitalism—for the main instrument by which the ideal society is to be achieved. Too little, because they do not require of society or of the state the pursuit of a de facto, but only of a de jure, truth, justice, righteousness, or freedom. The eschatological alternative makes neither of these mistakes.

On this view society is "secular" in the sense and to the degree not that it divides body from soul or means from ends, but to the extent that it is conscious of, and consistent with, its entirely provisional and temporary character. For it belongs to an age that is entirely provisional: an age with the highest possible expectations—the coming of the kingdom of God—and the gravest of reservations—an intuition of "the mystery of lawlessness" at work even within the law itself. Eschatological secularism does not respond by demanding a state that renders no metaphysical or religious judgments (this it regards as an impossibility) but rather by demanding a state that renders these judgments more openly, precisely so that they can be subjected to public scrutiny and debate. For on this view the religious judgments of the state are not and cannot be absolute, and their reach cannot be anything like comprehensive. Likewise, then, their enactment and enforcement must be tempered by a profound sense of provisionality, and tested accordingly. The Church may, if it will, say *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, but the state may never make a comparable claim.

On the other hand, such a state enjoys a new freedom. Unlike its supposedly neutral counterpart, it does not have to play the nanny. It does not have to burden itself with the impossible task of appearing to balance every claim to public resources or respect. It is free to respond to the truth, and is not obligated to treat all would-be truths equally.

The objection will be made, however, that this "eschatological" alternative contains its own bid for hegemony. Do we really want a society that makes, or a state that operates on the basis of, religious commitments? Whose commitments? And which eschatology exactly will be in play? Do eschatologies not vary widely within religions, and between them? Is our society not generally skeptical of religious eschatologies? How can such things possibly be decided anyway? Is this just nostalgia for a past—a Christian past—that is no longer either accessible or desirable? A nostalgia that is in fact threatening to Jews, to Muslims, to agnostics? Should it not be dismissed out of hand for that reason, if for no other?

I would reply to these objections in two ways. First, by pressing the claim that there is no alternative to a society, or to a state, that makes religious judgments. It is true that the supersessionist approach tends to be hostile to much traditional religion. It is equally true that the liberal approach (while repudiating this hostility) intends to reject in principle any state-sanctioned religion. But that does not alter the fact that religious judgments will be made in both cases. Certainly negative judgments cannot be avoided. The state will operate as if it were *not* the case that Moses speaks for God, or that Jesus is Lord, or that the Koran is the highest authority in all human affairs, and so forth. But I have argued that positive judgments of a religious nature will also be made, since no society can evade the kind of questions that produce such judgments. Some warrant must be offered for every attempt (including those of political theorists) to regulate human affairs, and this warrant will sooner or later imply an anthropology or a worldview that rivals its "religious" predecessors and competitors in comprehensiveness. Moreover, certain rituals will in time be developed to signal and to reinforce this warrant and this worldview, since communal action requires such rituals.

So there is no way out. Neither the need to make religious decisions, nor the extreme difficulty in doing so, can be avoided. And these decisions, in one fashion or another, will have to be enforced, making perfectly clear that what we are dealing with is not apples and oranges (secular judgments and religious judgments) but apples and apples (secular judgments that are at the same time religious). The only way in which the illusion of apples and oranges, or the myth of liberal neutrality, or the so-called wall of separation can be maintained, even for a time, is by redefining religious judgments as purely "spiritual" in nature, that is, as private opinions or beliefs that have no bearing on public behavior. This, of course, is to define religion out of existence. But to define religion out of existence is to revert, after all, to the crudest kind of supersessionism.

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Second, I would reply by reversing the charge that the eschatological model smacks of nostalgia for a lost Christian hegemony. The fact is that the eschatological model is not for hegemony at all, but for restraint. It will have to be allowed that the restraint it calls for—the restraint it urges upon every society and every worldly government—is one that is based upon a sense of provisionality that is informed by the particular religious traditions I have identified. It will also have to be allowed that these traditions have sometimes been at odds with each other, and with themselves, and that they have witnessed (or even been party to) quite disastrous attempts to interpret their basic eschatological convictions in ways that have effectively undermined political restraint. It will have to be confessed that, when this has happened, it has sometimes been accompanied by great evils, from which Jews especially (but not only Jews) have suffered.

This only helps to make the point. For it is in the messianic (that is, in the Jewish and Christian) traditions that the problem, and the possibility, of political restraint has come to the fore, generating these very debates about secularism. And it is in the intersection of these traditions with their Islamic counterpart—an intersection which lies, quite literally, in Jerusalem and the West Bank—that the problem will have ultimately to be solved. What I have suggested, however, is that neither supersessionist nor liberal secularism *can* solve it, whether in the Middle East or here at home, because both are hegemonic in nature. Ironically, it is they that represent the extension, not the correction, of what was false in Christendom.

This is not the place to say what eschatological secularism might contribute to the Middle East. But is this model either accessible or desirable even here at home? Our level of comfort with it might grow if we gave it another name: "deliberation secularism," say, or "accountability secularism," both of which would appeal to the best intentions of the supersessionist or of the liberal, and might point the way to common ground. Or, if it is not too hubristic, "modest secularism." Whatever we called it, it would still be the same thing if it required of us the will to determine openly, by due process of civil debate, what are the goods (not merely the "values") to which we ought to hold, without denying that the identification of these goods may in itself involve a collective act of religious judgment. *And* if it cultivated the appropriate caution in choosing means to pursue or protect these goods, so as to give, as far as possible, the benefit of the doubt to dissenting voices and communities.

For such a "modest" secularism, it is not necessary that our society be largely united in religion. It is not even necessary to have a certain sort of constitution or government. It is necessary only to have a government that fosters free debate, and that is prepared to allow that, since it *is* secular, it must act on the basis that it is accountable, not only to its citizens and to its laws, but to God. This means precisely that it does not imagine itself to be a theocracy. But it also means that, while it can be a government friendly to agnostics and atheists, it cannot be an atheistic government. "One nation under God," or "founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law": such constitutional references cannot become dead letters without modest secularism passing over into immodest secularism. As to exactly who or what is indicated by "God," that will be debated between societies, and also within them, until God determines that the time for debating is done.

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The Dark Night of Mother Teresa

Carol Zaleski

On October 19, 2003, Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) will be beatified in Rome. During the three-and-a-half-year investigation into her cause, no less thorough for having been hastened by the waiver of the customary five-year waiting period, every nook and cranny of her life was studied for evidence that she is the great saint, the Christian Mahatma, that the world already believes her to be. The date chosen for her beatification, Mission Sunday, is the Sunday closest to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II and to the end of the Year of the Rosary. This may be taken as a sign of how close Mother Teresa's cause is to the Pope's heart. In any case, the beatification of Mother Teresa makes a fitting colophon to the era of turbulence and grace that will always be associated with his name. Since the pontificate of Gregory the Great (590-604), nearly every generation of Christians has felt itself living in a Church too old to produce heroic saints. If during the days of John Paul II we are inclined to a similar despondency, we have only to consider Mother Teresa to be reminded of how young the Church really is, how capable of fidelity and passionate witness to Christ.

One would expect the canonization process to be steady and sure and, aside from a few marginal detractors, uncontroversial, for no saint has ever been more in the public eye. In her life-long service to Christ in the poorest of the poor, and her simple and consistent teachings on the law of love, she was an open book. She tried always to be transparent to Christ, and in that very transparency her inner life was hidden, making her a difficult subject for biographers. Malcolm Muggeridge observed that when the eighteen-year-old Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu left her family to join the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto, it was "the end of her biography and the beginning of her life." It is only now with the end of her life, and the beginning of her cause, that the biography resumes, and new dimensions of her character are revealed.

During November and December of last year, the ZENIT News Agency published in four installments a study of *The Soul of Mother Teresa: Hidden Aspects of Her Interior Life*, by the Postulator of Mother Teresa's cause, Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C. In this study a new portrait of Mother Teresa's interior life emerges, drawn largely from letters she sent to her spiritual directors. She had wanted the letters to be destroyed, not intending to leave behind any record of her spiritual life ("I want the work to remain only His"), but they were preserved nonetheless; and who among us would willingly dispatch them to the shredder? Fr. Kolodiejchuk's study is just the tip of the iceberg—the documentation submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints runs to eight volumes—but what it shows us is Mother Teresa as a classic Christian mystic whose inner life was burned through by the fire of charity, and whose fidelity was tested and purified by an intense trial of faith, a true dark night of the soul.

Fr. Kolodiejchuk sees Mother Teresa's life as unfolding in four phases:

1) Her childhood and youth, when from the time of her First Communion at age five and a half she felt her heart captivated by the love of Jesus and of neighbor, and discovered her call to join the missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto. While it was difficult to leave her family, she found her time as a Loreto nun, teaching in the convent school in Calcutta, immensely rewarding. She was by all accounts a happy though not particularly brilliant nun (she is remembered, among other things, for having fumbled the candles at Benediction). The keynote of this period is youthful zeal and joy.

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2) The Vow of 1942. At age thirty-two, at the end of her annual retreat, with the permission of her spiritual director, Mother Teresa made a vow to give herself utterly and unreservedly to Christ: "To give God anything that He may ask . . . not to refuse Him anything."

3) The Call within a Call. On September 10, 1946, the day celebrated by the Missionaries of Charity as "Inspiration Day," Mother Teresa was traveling by train from Calcutta to a retreat house in Darjeeling. During this trip, the realization came to her that Jesus was calling her to serve him radically in the poorest of the poor. Only in private letters to her spiritual director, Fr. Celeste Van Exem, S.J., and (under Fr. Van Exem's cautious instruction) to Archbishop Ferdinand Périer, S.J., did she reveal that this call was more than just an inner prompting. Jesus appeared and spoke to her, in a series of interior locutions and visions. "Wouldst thou not help?" Jesus asked her. "How can I?" Mother Teresa responded, expressing her fear of incurring ridicule, loneliness, deprivation, and failure should she leave her happy life as a Loreto nun, exchange her habit for a rough sari, and take up the uncertain life Jesus was demanding of her. Repeatedly he asked her, "Wilt thou refuse? You have become my spouse for my love. You have come to India for me. The thirst you had for souls brought you so far. Are you afraid now to take one more step for your spouse, for me, for souls?" And again: "I want Indian nuns, Missionaries of Charity, who would be my fire of love amongst the poor, the sick, the dying, and the little children. . . ." The chief motivation for the Missionaries of Charity, as she would often say, was not to do social work, but to adore Christ in the littlest and weakest of his children, and to bring Christ the souls for which he thirsts.

4) The Dark Night. Throughout 1946 and 1947, Mother Teresa experienced a profound union with Christ. But soon after she left the convent and began her work among the destitute and dying on the street, the visions and locutions ceased, and she experienced a spiritual darkness that would remain with her until her death. It is hard to know what is more to be marveled at: that this twentieth-century commander of a worldwide apostolate and army of charity should have been a visionary contemplative at heart; or that she should have persisted in radiating invincible faith and love while suffering inwardly from the loss of spiritual consolation. In letters written during the 1950s and 1960s to Fr. Van Exem, Archbishop Périer, and to later spiritual directors, Fr. L. T. Picachy, S.J., and Fr. J. Neuner, S.J., she disclosed feelings of doubt, loneliness, and abandonment. God seemed absent, heaven empty, and bitterest of all, her own suffering seemed to count for nothing, ". . . just that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing."

The dark night of Mother Teresa presents us with an even greater interpretive challenge than her visions and locutions. It means that the missionary foundress who called herself "God's pencil" was not the God-intoxicated saint many of us had assumed her to be. We may prefer to think that she spent her days in a state of ecstatic mystical union with God, because that would get us ordinary worldlings off the hook. How else could this unremarkable woman, no different from the rest of us, bear to throw her lot in with the poorest of the poor, sharing their meager diet and rough clothing, wiping leprous sores and enduring the agonies of the dying, for so many years without respite, unless she were somehow lifted above it all, shielded by spiritual endorphins? Yet we have her own testimony that what made her self-negating work possible was not a subjective experience of ecstasy but an objective relationship to God shorn of the sensible awareness of God's presence.

In the history of Christian theology and spirituality, there have been many accounts of divine darkness, with a host of different implications. It is an ancient doctrine, emphasized by apophatic theologians and mystics, that God dwells in inaccessible light, a light so searingly absolute that it cancels out all images and ideas we may form of Him, veiling the divine glory in a dark "cloud of unknowing." This tradition owes much to the Christian Neoplatonist Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and his liturgically inspired vision of ascent to the divine throne; as such, it says more about divine transcendence than about human desolation.

Among the monastic writers who flourished during the sunlit years of the twelfth century, divine darkness was an essentially cheerful idea. William of St. Thierry positively delighted in our mind's incapacity to see that God is present, for he counted on love to make good the deficiencies of our feeble intellect. Love is the eye with which we see God, William said; love itself is understanding. But love is not to be confused with mere feelings. Feelings burn out too easily; they can be manipulated or seduced. The love by which we see God must be an act of the will rather than a passing affection of the heart.

Later generations of Christian mystics dwelt upon the more desolate kinds of darkness to which the spiritual life can lead: the darkness in which all modes of prayer and spiritual practice become arid, and all consolation in the love of God seems lost. Even in the desolate dark night of the soul, indeed especially there, St. John of the Cross taught, God is present, purifying the soul of all passions and hindrances, and preparing her for the inconceivable blessedness of divine union. Along with dark knowing, there is dark loving, no less ardent for being deprived of all sensible and spiritual vision of the beloved. Therefore St. John can say, "Oh,

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night more lovely than the dawn, Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in the Beloved!"

Yet only in the modern period has the dark night of the soul taken the form of radical doubt, doubting not only one's own state of grace, but God's promises and even God's existence. A wise Benedictine, John Chapman of Downside Abbey, made this point in a 1923 letter to a non-monastic friend: "[I]n the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most pious souls seem to have gone through a period in which they felt sure that God had reprobated them. . . . This doesn't seem to happen nowadays. But the *corresponding trial* of our contemporaries seems to be the *feeling of not having any faith*; not temptations against any particular article, but a mere feeling that religion is not true."

For this annihilating temptation, Chapman wrote, "the only remedy is to *despise* the whole thing, and pay no attention to it—except (of course) to assure our Lord that one is ready to suffer from it as long as he wishes." The "feeling of not having any faith" is painful because it is an authentic purgation, during which "faith is really particularly strong all the time," and one is being brought into closer union with the suffering Christ.

This was exactly the way Mother Teresa learned to deal with her trial of faith: by converting her feeling of abandonment by God into an act of abandonment *to* God. It would be her Gethsemane, she came to believe, and her participation in the thirst Jesus suffered on the Cross. And it gave her access to the deepest poverty of the modern world: the poverty of meaninglessness and loneliness. To endure this trial of faith would be to bear witness to the fidelity for which the world is starving. "Keep smiling," Mother Teresa used to tell her community and guests, and somehow, coming from her, it doesn't seem trite. For when she kept smiling during her night of faith, it was not a cover-up but a manifestation of her loving resolve to be "an apostle of joy."

One can better understand, having read *The Soul of Mother Teresa*, why she insisted that adoration of Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament should occupy the center of the Missionaries' daily work; and why she felt it imperative to establish purely contemplative communities that would make the Missionaries of Charity an order of adoration as well as apostolic service. Adoring Christ in the Sacrament is also a way of dark knowing and dark loving. To all appearances he is absent, as Aquinas says in the *Tantum ergo Sacramentum*, so faith must supply what is lacking to our feeble senses. Humanly, there were times when Mother Teresa felt burnt out, but faith supplied what was lacking even to troubled faith; spiritually she was often desolate, but her vow endured and her visible radiance—to which everyone attests—was undiminished. This lifelong fidelity should not be confused with a Stoic determination to keep going in the face of defeat. It was something else entirely: objective Christian joy.

Mother Teresa is not the only modern saint to have undergone such a trial of faith; one thinks also of precursors like St. Paul of the Cross (1694-1775), founder of the Passionists, and St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641), foundress of the Visitandines, but above all of Mother Teresa's namesake, St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897), the French Carmelite famous for her "Little Way." The parallels between Mother Teresa (Teresa of the Child Jesus) and St. Thérèse (Teresa of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face) are really quite remarkable. Thérèse also made a vow, informally as a young child, and formally on two occasions as a professed Carmelite nun, to refuse nothing to Jesus. Like Mother Teresa, she had longed to be sent forth in the missions as a herald of God's love; since her frailty prevented this, she rejoiced in being assigned missionaries for whom she prayed and whom she regarded with great affection as her spiritual brothers. She, too, felt multiple calls; indeed, she felt all calls at once: "I feel the vocation of *the warrior, the priest, the apostle, the doctor, the martyr*," she wrote. "I feel within my soul the courage of the *Crusader*, the *Papal Guard*, and I would want to die on the field of battle in defense of the Church." Not for feminist reasons did she say, "I feel in me the *vocation* of the *priest*," but rather because of a youthful desire to be all in all for Christ. The "Little Way" was her solution: "I understood that *love comprised all vocations, that love was everything . . . my vocation is love!* . . . In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be *Love*." If love were dependent on mere feelings, however, her vocation would have foundered, for as Thérèse wrote, "Do not believe I am swimming in consolations; oh, no, my consolation is to have none on earth."

From Easter 1896 until her death from tuberculosis on September 30, 1897, at age twenty-four, Thérèse endured a trial of faith of the modern kind, which she described as like being enclosed in a dark tunnel. She seemed to hear the darkness mocking her: "You are dreaming about the light, about a fatherland embalmed in the sweetest perfumes; you are dreaming about the *eternal* possession of the Creator of all these marvels; you believe that one day you will walk out of this fog which surrounds you! Advance, advance; rejoice in death which will give you not what you hope for but a night still more profound, the night of nothingness." According to tradition she died trusting and loving God in the very grip of this doubt, and promising to spend her heaven doing good on earth.

Is it fanciful to consider the possibility that Mother Teresa, who died in the same month one hundred years later, who experienced the same ardent call, made the

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same vow of surrender, suffered the same desolation of faith, and embodied in the face of that dark night the same teaching of fidelity in small things, may have in some way been completing the mission of St. Thérèse? Could it be that this missionary contemplative and this contemplative missionary are companions in a joint work of grace?

However that may be, it was the same objective Christian joy that made Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu become a Saint Teresa for our time, and a saint-maker for our future. When we consider her life and the ongoing life of her community, the Church seems young again, and everything seems possible. If these days are in any sense a dark night for the Church, then Mother Teresa shows the way forward: faith that we are undergoing a purification rather than a free-fall, and fidelity, in small things as well as big, to the vows that bind in order to set free. FT

Friend, in the Desolate Time

Friend, in the desolate time, when your soul
is enshrouded in darkness
  When, in a deep abyss, memory and feeling
die out,
Intellect timidly gropes among shadowy forms
and illusions
  Heart can no longer sigh, eye is unable
to weep;
When, from your night-clouded soul the wings
of fire have fallen
  And you, to nothing, afraid, feel
yourself sinking once more,
Say, who rescues you then?—Who is the
comforting angel
  Brings to your innermost soul order and
beauty again,
Building once more your fragmented world,
restoring the fallen
  Altar, and when it is raised, lighting
the sacred flame?—
None but the powerful being who first from
the limitless darkness
  Kissed to life seraphs and woke
numberless suns to their dance.
None but the holy Word who called the worlds
into existence
  And in whose power the worlds move on
their paths to this day.
Therefore, rejoice, oh friend, and sing in
the darkness of sorrow:
  Night is the mother of day, Chaos the
neighbor of God.

Erik Johan Stagnelius
Translated from the Swedish by Bill Coyle

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Visions of Eternity

Daniel Callahan

Few problems have so vexed the human spirit over the centuries as those of aging and death. Why are we afflicted with them? Are they forever part of our fate? Is there any way out? Yet hope has never been lost that there might be a way of transcending those seemingly final milestones. While not everyone longs to pass beyond bodily limits, it is for many people a deeply rooted desire. It can be construed most narrowly as a fear of death, but more richly as a longing for a different vision of life's possibilities—a life that does not end, that remains engaging and fulfilling, and that unites us once and forever with those we love, whether divine or human. As William James put it, "The fact that we can die, that we can be ill at all, is what perplexes us. . . . We need a life not correlated with death, a health not liable to illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good that flies beyond the Good of nature."

Historically, there have been three routes taken to explore that possibility: the philosophical examination of the idea of immortality; various religious beliefs and speculations on an eternal life; and, most recently, a reinvigorated scientific dream of overcoming aging and death. I will not rehearse the long philosophical debate on immortality. My own sense is that the philosophical arguments in favor of immortality have not carried the day. Nor has there been of late any lively intellectual interest in the topic. At least one distinguished commentator, the late philosopher Hans Jonas, surely sympathetic to religion, judged that "the modern temper is uncongenial to the idea of immortality."

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Yet public opinion surveys show that there is a widespread belief in immortality among the American public. And even as Jonas was writing those words in the mid-1960s, the genetic revolution was gaining momentum. One persistent dream is that of a genetic modification of aging, at the least to take the sting out of it by improving its quality, and more boldly by radically increasing life expectancy, and perhaps even to achieve immortality. If the modern temper is not congenial to the idea of immortality as a philosophical concept, many scientists and their enthusiastic lay followers—usually indifferent to philosophical discussions—have become excited about the prospect of new combat against aging and death.

My aim in what follows is to compare various scientific visions of life extension, encompassing possible immortality, with the Christian vision of life eternal and the resurrection of the body. I could have chosen different religious traditions, but in the Christian tradition there are some well-articulated depictions about what life eternal might look like. There are also many Jewish thinkers who believe it to be part of their tradition, and in a form similar to Christian belief. The graveside prayer, the Kaddish, says "May God's great name be exalted and sanctified in the world which will be renewed, and where God will revive the dead and raise them to eternal life."

I will use the language of "vision" because, though it is easily reducible to cliché, it best captures the nature of the discussion, which in both the religious and scientific cases is exceedingly speculative. No one can say what the future world of scientific life extension, if it comes, will be like. It is at best an imaginative extrapolation from our present life. Apart from scriptural clues and theological reflection, no one can say what life eternal with God will be like either. At best in each instance we can find a few hints, but that is all—though the Chris-

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tian tradition has elaborated its vision over a much longer period.

The scientific vision of immortality is a comparatively new entrant in thinking about the future of our lives. To be sure, there have always been some scientific visions of a medically transformed human life, going back to Francis Bacon and René Descartes. But few were so hopeful as the French philosophe Condorcet in his 1795 history of human progress. "Would it be absurd then to suppose," he asked, "that this perfection of the human species might be capable of indefinite progress; that the day will come when death will be due only to extraordinary accidents or to the decay of the vital forces, and that, ultimately, the average span between birth and decay will have no assignable value? Certainly man will not become immortal, but will not the interval between the first breath that he draws and the time when in the natural course of events . . . he expires increase indefinitely?"

Yet there has been a change in science since the end of the eighteenth century. The earlier speculations were based on a belief in the unlimited power of science to effect human progress, however that might be brought about. But there were not any specific insights into how an indefinitely extended life span might actually be accomplished. Contemporary genetics and cell biology have begun to fill in the necessary details, setting out some plausible road maps to that end.

A comparison with the earlier philosophical debate on immortality offers an insight into the importance of the change in perspective. The philosophical debate on immortality trailed off, I believe, for a specific reason. Cartesian dualism, sharply separating mind and body, had long been rejected by the twentieth century and with it the Platonic idea of a soul, or mind, that could exist independently and forever apart from a body. Philosophical proponents of immortality could offer no plausible way of explaining how the decayed body of a dead person could ever be rejoined with his mind, lost along with the body, to make again a full person.

The new scientific speculations offer a solution to that problem: the body itself will be saved and with it the inextricably joined brain and mind that are the essence of personhood. It is, so to speak, useless to think about saving a separate mind or soul. They can only be saved by arresting or reversing the hitherto natural entropy of the body, seemingly programmed to decline and die, taking with it the mind. For many scientists, and even more for their eager lay followers, it has become realistic to hope to change that program.

The way into the new scientific optimism is through research on aging. While many diseases kill people prematurely, the majority of people in developed countries die after the age of sixty-five, with more and more reaching the eighties, nineties, and beyond. If death is ever to be conquered medically, then the royal road to death, that of aging bodies and fading minds, must be dealt with. I will not here recount in detail the various theories and experiments being pursued to bring about that end. They include going after the damage to cells done by free radicals, making use of hormone therapy, or caloric restrictions, or vitamin supplements, or, most dramatically, healthy gene selection through preimplantation genetic diagnosis and even repairing the entire human genome.

The possibilities are broad and tantalizing. They raise the question of whether aging is best understood as a natural, permanent stage of life or a disease. That question is now being answered not by directly asserting that it is a disease, but rather by treating it as if it were one. This can be done by distinguishing between the process of aging itself, on the one hand, and the reduced biological capacities, the diseases, and the disabilities that have traditionally been the correlates of aging, on the other. If the latter can be radically reduced or eliminated, then one has the functional equivalent of a cure for aging. As one geneticist, Michael R. Rose, has tellingly put it, if we could gain for the elderly the health of those between the ages of ten and fifteen in developed countries, most Americans would have a life expectancy of 1200 years, and some would live 2000 years.

A cautionary note is necessary at this point. Few scientists of any serious reputation project a clean cure for aging and its partner, death. They are most likely to talk of a great increase in average life expectancy, of the conquest of the diseases of aging, and of preserving the capacities and vigor of youth. Recall the phrase from Condorcet predicting a time when "the average span between birth and decay will have no assignable value." That is not immortality, but is edging close to it. I suspect that a similar way of talking helps the more utopian scientists in our day to speculate freely while not looking foolish to their colleagues.

Hardly any serious medical scientist will talk about achieving life eternal, but they are perfectly comfortable in projecting cures in the future for all of the important lethal diseases. The Human Genome Project, not long ago completed at a cost of $3 billion, was often presented by its promoters as opening the way to discovering the ultimate genetic causes of all diseases, thus setting the stage for their cure. The logical trajectory of such visions is tantamount to immortality. If nothing can kill us biologically, then (barring war and social violence) we should be able to live indefinitely.

The ambivalence on the part of many scientists about what they ultimately hope for, and the ambiguity of their language about it, is matched by similar tip-toeing by

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some seasoned science reporters. One such reporter, Ronald Bailey of *Reason* magazine, deftly handled the ambiguity recently by quoting in one paragraph a prominent researcher, Leonard Hayflick, to the effect that "there is no intervention that has been proven to slow, stop, or reverse aging. Period." Then, in the next paragraph, Bailey said, "Despite that, researchers are making a lot of progress." The title of his article was "Forever Young: The New Scientific Search for Immortality," and it did convey the flavor of the article even if Bailey skirted the word "immortality" in the text itself. At the end of the article, he added to the ambiguity by quoting approvingly a demographic researcher, Jay Olshansky, who has said that "we don't want to make ourselves older longer, we want to make ourselves younger longer." Just how much longer was not specified.

There are at least three possible goals for such research. One of them, the normalizing of aging, would aim to get everyone up to an average life expectancy of that now enjoyed by Japanese women, that of eighty-five years. The American average is now 76.9 years and is steadily increasing (with the gap between men and women now diminishing). Another goal, which I think of as the optimalization of aging, would be to get everyone to the age of about 120 or so, matching the life span of the French woman who died a few years ago at 122; it has become increasingly common already for some people to make it to 105-110 years old. A third goal can be called maximizing life expectancy, aiming for life spans beyond 150 years and then indefinitely long after that.

Perhaps this last possibility might better be called incremental immortality—Condorcet's "no assignable value"—since it promises to add ever more years with no envisioned stopping point. That seems to be the utopian goal and one which, as I have suggested, is built into the eschatological trajectory of the quest to subdue aging, even if not as an explicit aim. In the general context of these three possible aims, it is worth mentioning that some demographers project an average life expectancy of close to 100 within fifty years or so even without any specific effort to achieve that outcome. There is solid evidence that, for at least 160 years, average life expectancy has increased at a rate of three months per year every year. Why is this happening? It is coming about because of improved socioeconomic conditions, the main determinant of population health; because of higher general standards of living that reduce the mortality rate of every age group; and because of technologies that improve the quality of life of the elderly, an indirect effect of which is to increase average life expectancy.

Two features of these various scientific speculations, particularly the most utopian, are worth some comment. One of them is the assumption that science will overcome what was long taken to be the most worrisome possibility of a much longer life, that of increased disability and dependence. Two decades ago it was common for epidemiologists to posit, with good evidence, the proposition "longer life, worse health." The ideal of what was called a "compression of morbidity," that of a long life in good health followed by a quick death, seemed a fanciful and unlikely outcome of medical progress.

But this pessimism has switched to optimism. More recent evidence has shown that, as average life expectancy has increased, the disabilities traditionally associated with aging have actually decreased. There are simply more healthy older people these days than there were just a few years ago. As even casual observation reveals, those who live to be ninety or older have, typically, not spent much time in the company of doctors and high-technology medicine. Good genes and a healthy lifestyle enable those fortunate people to do an end run around the health care system.

In short, the long history of cautionary tales about the implications of a radically longer life has now given way to a newly envisioned, upbeat old age. We can put aside the struldbrugs in *Gulliver's Travels*, who had lived for hundreds of years and "who had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more, which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying." The scientific believers confidently assume that the commonly expected burdens of aging bodies will be lifted, and that this has already begun to happen to some extent. The new cautionary tales center on how life may have to be brought to an end if people live indefinitely long in good health and just get tired of it all. Would not opposition to euthanasia, for instance, have to be reconsidered if bodies no longer ran down?

The other—and, I think, more important—feature of the scientific speculations about greatly extended life spans is a pervasive vagueness about what our lives and our societies might be like if we lived dramatically longer lives. The rationale for pursuing much longer life is not presented as if it were some kind of social necessity, as if we would have better societies if everyone lived much longer, or that it would help solve some pressing social problems. Instead, the rationale appears to be that an extended life span would simply satisfy many private desires: first, hardly anyone wants to die; second, as a basic human good, life is worth extending indefinitely; and, third, it would be remiss of science not to respond to that ancient expression of human hope and desire.

When potential problems are mentioned, they are rarely confronted directly. Just as there is a working assumption that medical progress will deal successfully with the long-standing disabilities associated with aging, there is an analogous assumption that, somehow or

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other, the social problems occasioned by much longer lives will be solved as well. After all, it might be said, we are not going to jump instantly into an era of radically longer lives. We will have plenty of time to gradually learn how to cope with any problems that might come up. Along the way it is possible, even likely, that whole new realms of unexplored, hitherto inaccessible human experience may open up to us. If a gain of fifty years of life expectancy during the past thousand years—and a thirty-year jump in the twentieth century alone—has immeasurably improved the quality and security of our lives, why shouldn't we envision similar benefits from much longer lives? As two demographers have written, "Increases in longevity are conducive to improvements in wealth and thus create a virtuous spiral."

That kind of uplifting rhetoric manages to neatly bypass one of the most telling worries about immortality. The philosopher Bernard Williams has noted the "profound difficulty of providing any model of an unending, supposedly satisfying, state or activity which would not rightly prove boring to anyone who remained conscious of himself and who has acquired a character, interests, tastes, and impatience in the course of living, already, a finite life." Likewise, in his 1922 play *The Makropulos Secret*, Karel Capek has one of his characters, Emilia, now 337 years old, say that "no one can love for three hundred years—it cannot last. And then everything tires one. It tires one to be good, it tires one to be bad. The whole earth tires one. And then you find out there is nothing at all: no sin, no pain, no earth, nothing." As the theologian Carol Zaleski has noted, "To be given everlasting longevity without being remade for eternal life is to live under a curse."

That is not an inspiring picture. But don't worry, the optimists seem to be saying, we can deal with that. Such optimism ignores one fundamental problem, hardly ever alluded to, that of the social, not biological, pathologies that have in the past and in the present ruined so much of life and brought about so much misery and so many deaths. I believe that sickness and biological death represent a lesser evil than those we human beings bring upon ourselves. Is a death from cancer at eighty worse than death at the same age in a concentration camp from murder or deliberate starvation? Or is death at age five from a genetic disease worse than death from a nuclear bomb? Or is the pain of a broken marriage, or spousal abuse, or child molestation, necessarily less than the pain of arthritis or congestive heart failure?

Without solving enduring human problems, a medically extended life span could simply set the stage for more of the same social miseries. A cure for cancer or heart disease or Alzheimer's is not a cure for death from social pathologies or a guarantee that life without illness and disease will necessarily be marked by greater happiness. That is not to say that cures for major diseases would be irrelevant for happiness. They would surely help. It is only to say that, if the aim is to radically change live expectancies, then there are many things to be considered other than the benefits of health and mortality.

In the end, the enthusiasts simply ignore these problems. The visionary thrust of those hoping to extend life expectancy appears to come down to one simple idea: more time in our lives is sought by almost everyone; science *can* bring that about; therefore science *ought* to bring it about. In the face of that kind of argument, buttressed by an expectation that, problems or not, the research on life extension will go on anyway, those whom Ronald Bailey has called "the mortalists" must especially be taken to task for standing in the way of progress.

The argument of the mortalists is that death is not necessarily an ultimate evil, and that efforts to conquer it offer no obvious social benefits. Those efforts may, in fact, do harm to our understanding of the meaning of life and human nature. Leon R. Kass, Chair of the President's Council on Bioethics, has presented the most developed argument along these lines.

While Kass touches on the most common anxieties about a greatly extended average life expectancy—its potentially dire impact on work patterns, parenthood, the social security system, and species renewal, for instance—his main approach is to ponder the value of mortality and the finitude of life. In his recent book, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, he offers "four benefits" of mortality: *interest and engagement*, suggesting that adding, say, twenty years to the human life span would not proportionately increase the pleasures of life; *seriousness and aspiration*, proposing that the knowledge that our life is limited is what leads us to take life seriously and passionately; *beauty and love*, presenting the idea that it is precisely their perishability that makes, for instance, flowers beautiful to us, just as the coming and going of spring makes that season all the more meaningful; and, finally, *virtue and moral excellence*, by which he means the virtuous and noble deeds that mortality makes possible, including the sacrifice of our own life for a worthy cause. (See also Kass' article "L'Chaim and Its Limits: Why Not Immortality?" FT, May 2001.)

For my part, I find these benefits of uncertain value, suggestive but not wholly persuasive; and, in any event, Kass seems intent more on evoking insights or feelings than in rigorously proving the case for mortality. Most tellingly, he concludes that "the immortals cannot be noble" and that "immortality is a kind of oblivion—like death itself." At the least, that first conclusion seems to me unproven by his own arguments in favor of mortality. If people were genetically programmed for immor-

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tality, for instance—that is, if they were born that way and did not voluntarily choose immortality—then why could they not be prepared to give their life for others? Not every biologically immortal person need succumb to an obsession with survival. Moreover, even if immortality was given to us by a pill taken voluntarily, that possibility need not entail an unwillingness to serve others and to die for them if necessary.

But Kass' more important contention is that "immortality is a kind of oblivion." "Mortality as such," he writes, "is not our defect nor bodily immortality our goal. Rather, mortality is at most a pointer, a derivative manifestation, or an accompaniment of some deeper deficiency. . . . [T]he human soul yearns for, longs for, aspires to some condition, some state, some goal toward which our earthly activities are directed but which cannot be attained in earthly life. . . . [M]an longs not so much for deathlessness as for wholeness, wisdom, goodness, and godliness." The immortality that medical science would make possible could not satisfy this kind of longing, he says, and here he seems right on target.

Kass' analysis could of course be used to make the case for a union with God, and eternal life in His presence, as the true end of that kind of desire. This is what the longing has traditionally been taken to mean. He does not, however, go in that direction, though he glancingly notes it as a possibility. He says instead that our perpetuation through procreation is a valid way of satisfying our yearning for something more than sheer mortality. "One cannot," he writes, "pursue agelessness for oneself and remain faithful to the spirit and meaning of procreation." Procreation is, then, the most promising positive route to immortality: we pass on to our children and then to their children not only our genes, but also our values and worldviews, and so we live on.

There is much that can be said for such a belief. But, as a parent, it conflicts with my idea and experience of parenthood, which has everything to say in favor of the future lives of those children and their happiness, and nothing whatever to do with perpetuating me. Kass' view thus strikes me as fundamentally flawed. Children are their own persons, not clones, and, despite the genes I pass on (whose value is unclear), I will not live on in my children other than (I hope) as a fond memory and as the originator of a few hardly original ideas and virtues. Even more, I cannot hope to live on in my great-great-grandchildren in any meaningful way whatever. Kass, moreover, characterizes the deep longing as something that "cannot be attained in earthly life," which is just where procreation is located. It thus fails to meet his own standard.

Nevertheless, Kass is right, I believe, to think that none of the secular versions of immortality, the kind science might give us, can satisfy our deeper yearnings, assuming we have them as part of our human nature. Leaving aside wholly imaginary musing about the new possibilities for human liberation that might accompany infinitely expanded life spans—multiple psychological lives, multiple careers, multiple hobbies, and multiple spouses—the essence of the secular and scientific ideal is simply more time on this earth. We will live lives not too different from those we now live. But that outcome will likely not satisfy the longings to which Kass rightly points.

If we take seriously the desire for something more than an immortal life brought to us by science, then the theological—and specifically Christian—alternative would seem to be worthy of our attention. Indeed, leaving aside the matter of whether the Christian view of eternal life is true or not, it is remarkable how sensitive it is to the various objections that can be leveled against the scientific vision. At the same time, it is no less sensitive to the desire of human beings not to sicken and die, to be relieved of social strife and injustice, to be forever in the company of their loved ones, to have their deepest yearnings satisfied, and to have an infinitely long life, one that is infinitely and interestingly worth having.

Let me say at once that those virtues do not give any added plausibility to the Christian vision in contrast to the scientific vision. A skeptic could say that the scientific view is incomplete and problem-ridden, while the Christian vision is just outlandish. But what I find interesting about the Christian vision is how over the centuries it has worked out most, and maybe all, of the conceptual pitfalls that go along with the concept of an eternal life.

At the core of the Christian belief in eternal life is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christ's resurrection is not only the promise of our resurrection but also a promise that we will, though transformed, still be ourselves in all of our uniqueness, in body and soul, when we are reborn. The Jesus who came back from the dead was the same Jesus who was crucified. Just as the scientific vision has understood that it is the preservation of the body that is the key to the preservation of our personhood—not an abstract, disembodied saving of our soul alone—so also Christian belief has insisted on the necessity of embodiment. In its condemnation of the Cathars, the Second Lateran Council of 1215 required heretics and other dissenters to agree to the proposition that "all rise with their own individual bodies, that is, the bodies they now wear."

But just what is the body we now wear? Young, middle-aged, or old? Recall the judgment of Jay Olshansky, quoted above, that the scientific aim is to "make ourselves younger longer." Thomas Aquinas would have agreed with that aim. "But all must rise in the age of

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Christ," he wrote, "which is that of youth, by reason of the perfection of nature which is found in that age alone. For the age of boyhood has not yet achieved the perfection of nature through increase; and by decrease old age has withdrawn from the perfection." While some might disagree with the view that "boyhood" is not old enough as an ideal for our body, few are likely to dispute another feature of eternal life, that of "freedom from noxious passions, internal and external."

Nor is St. Bernard of Clairvaux's twelfth-century description of our body objectionable. As the historian Caroline Walker Bynum has summarized Bernard's views, "the glorified body . . . will possess immortality so it does not become dust, impassibility so that it does not experience suffering or disorder, lightness so it will have none of the downward pull of weight, and beauty so it will be clear and shining, with no spot of shadow or dirtiness."

If the Christian vision presents an attractive view of our fate as individuals, it no less insists that our eternal life will be a life with others. As individuals on earth we always live in a close relationship with the rest of humanity; so also will it be in our immortality. Thus not only will we be reunited with our family and friends, but with all other persons. Our eternal life will be individual and collective, but now a collective life marked by peace and joy. No less importantly, the wholeness that is to be ours will see a restoration of the justice that was lacking in our temporal life. That is the meaning of the lovely phrase that in the final judgment "all tears will be wiped away."

"For in the end," as the English theologian Nicholas Lash has written, "God heals absolutely, makes all things new." And if the desire for a final justice is part of our human longing, so too is that longing for something more, whatever it might be, that Kass and the Western tradition have long sought. It is a longing never mentioned, I might add, by the generation of aspiring scientists and not at all the same as a desire simply for more time on earth. For the Christian that longing is above all for an eternal life with God, who alone can satisfy that deepest of our needs. "All love," Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has written, "desires eternity; God's love not only desires it, but effects it and is it."

While the details of our eternal life with our glorified body, with each other, and with God are necessarily sketchy at best, it is clear that some thought has been given to Bernard Williams' concern for boredom. The general belief seems to be that an eternal life with God and each other will, of its essence, be attractive and forever satisfying. But just how will that be? My favorite proffered solution to that puzzle comes in a passage from the fourteenth-century French nun and mystic, Marguerite of Oingt, who wrote that "the saints will be completely within their Creator as the fish within the sea: they will drink to satiety, without getting tired and without in any way diminishing the water. . . . [They] will drink and eat the great sweetness of God. And the more they eat, the more their hunger will grow. And this sweetness cannot decrease any more or less than can the water of the sea."

Put in somewhat different terms, it might be said that our immortality will consist of infinitely renewed desires, but fresh desires infinitely and differently satisfied. Should you wonder if, in eternal life, you might be bound down to some fixed place, God will give to His friends "an agility so great that in an instant they can go wherever they wish . . . [and] they can enter and depart through closed doors, without any impediment, as Jesus Christ did after the resurrection."

I have picked and chosen among a number of theologians and saints over the centuries to present this picture of the Christian belief in an afterlife. There have been many disputes, many fanciful tales, and of course a superheated imagination of a life no one has ever experienced on this earth. But it adds up to a much richer, more nuanced picture than anything the scientists and their followers have conjured up.

Caroline Walker Bynum's concluding words in her splendid book, *Resurrection of the Body*, are worth citing: "For however absurd [the resurrection of the body] seems . . . it is a concept of sublime courage and optimism. It locates redemption there where ultimate horror also resides—in pain, mutilation, death, and decay. . . . Those who articulated [it] faced without flinching the most negative of all the consequences of embodiment: the fragmentation, slime, and stench of the grave. . . . [W]e may not find their solutions plausible, but it is hard to feel they got the problem wrong." The crux of their "courage and optimism" was to make the body the center of their attention, turning their back on the Greek notion that the soul is the essence of personhood. Not so, the medievals held: it is the body.

There, in that belief, is the greatest commonality between the Christian and the contemporary scientific visions. Even if it entertained the idea of a soul, which it does not, science must of necessity work to reform the body and its wayward behavior. But if there is a critical confluence in the two visions of our possible future as embodied persons, there is also an enormous difference. Even if we believe the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, it is beyond our power to alter or manipulate the glorified body that will come after our time on earth. That power is in the hands of God alone. That is not the case with the body that science can examine and change. There is something that can be done about that, something that medicine has always done in seeking cures from disease and the relief of suffering.

But as I hope my earlier analysis of the scientific writing on life extension made clear, there is no working pic-

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ture or vision of what our lives, as individuals or living in common, might actually be like in the world that science might bring about. It is left vague and unexplored, papered over with assurances that there is more than enough time to work through lingering puzzles. This simply isn't good enough.

I conclude with a message for the lay public and then one for the scientific community. I place myself in the mortalist camp because for the time being, and probably much longer, aging and death will remain our fate, put off and ameliorated perhaps, but not vanquished. We thus have no serious choice but to accept them, to find what virtues we can in them, and to live our lives in a way that integrates them as best we can. Even for those who believe in the Christian possibility of eternal life, death is still a reality and still stings. It is a myth that those who believe in the resurrection of the body are insouciant about death. It is, after all, the end of that which they know firsthand and a parting from those they love, even if temporary. Faith and hope must take over at that point—because only these can bridge the gap. Few believers can fail to be troubled by that gap, even if they believe it will be transcended.

But putting these considerations aside, it is not too early to begin thinking together what a much longer length of life on earth ought to be like. Even if aging and death were not deliberate research targets, the demographic trends strongly suggest that the lives of future persons will be much longer on average than they now are, surely long enough to cause serious social disruption if not wisely handled. Like it or not we might then be forced to live with a kind of knowledge and a set of technical skills we might rue, but which could not be eliminated—any more than our knowledge of how to build nuclear weapons can be eliminated. One way or another, then, we had best give thought to the consequences, deliberately pursued or not, of lives much longer than those we now enjoy (if "enjoy" is the right word).

For the scientists and their followers who welcome efforts to directly understand the mysteries of aging, and to take up decisively effective arms against them, two considerations need to be confronted. One of them is this: it is irresponsible to continue pushing for a cure to aging without thinking through the likely consequences. It is not enough to believe that all the problems will be taken care of in due course. They might indeed—but poorly for lack of serious prior reflection. It is not good enough to pursue ever-longer life just because many people want it. People want lots of things that are not good for them or those around them. Desire alone has never been an adequate guide to a life worth living.

Likewise, it is not enough to proceed without some picture of the kind of life that future generations would have if the quest for a cure for aging were successful. It is not enough to contend that research should be pursued in the name of scientific freedom and that, in the name of market freedom, people should be able to take it or leave it as they see fit. We should know by now that almost every major technology introduced in the name of expanded personal choice sooner or later is overtaken by cultural patterns and practices that finally shape everyone's behavior, whittling away almost to nothing the range of the choice. How much choice do we really have about driving automobiles? Do women have about using prenatal diagnosis? Do we have for ignoring e-mail, the Internet, and television? It can be done, but most of us have neither the energy nor the psychological or economic resources to do with them exactly as we please.

The second consideration follows from the first. If scientists think through the consequences of their research, they will find considerable wisdom in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. I realize that the suggestion that science should turn to religion for guidance is unlikely to be welcomed. For many scientists, religion is viewed as an obstacle to doing good science and a constant threat to freedom of inquiry.

Nonetheless, in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body many generations of thoughtful and imaginative people have tried to envision what eternal life might be like; and, even more to the point, what it *ought* to be like if we are sensibly to desire it. It is not necessary to believe anything they have said about what eternal life will actually be like. It is sufficient that they have tried to go as far with their faith and imagination as they can—and with a sharp eye for the potential pitfalls that may accompany what they desire.

They have offered a vision that solves the problem of boredom; that solves the problem of our life in community with others and overcomes the pathologies of so-called civilized life, which finds us at each other's throats as often as not; that solves the problem of our body and our personhood, positing a body that is the one we have always known but finally glorified and without its frailties and decay; and that solves the problem of satisfying those infinite desires that nothing now on earth can fulfill.

All in all, it is not a bad model. There are, in any event, no other models with such compelling solutions to long-standing puzzles, just as there are no comparable efforts to think things through in the long term. The truly intimidating feature of a greatly extended life span, much less earthly immortality, is that just about everything else in human life would have to be changed to make it worthwhile. We would need, in effect, nothing less than a glorified body, one

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where each and every part and organ functioned perfectly, resistant to wear and tear. We would no less need an analogous social order that was perfect in its own way but that, at a minimum, did not kill us by war and violence or spoil life by meanness and other forms of private misery. We would have to find ways of living with technologies that kept them from forcing us into ways of life that really give us no choice at all about taking or leaving them. We would, in a word, have to become different kinds of people—transformed, glorified people. A quasi-immortal life would not be the end of our problems with finitude. It could just as well be the beginning of new ones that would make us nostalgic for our mortal past. FT

Evening Benediction

Brightness of beeswax candles sparkling through
our half-closed lids, eyes stung with incense smoke,
we new boys stumble through the Litany,
the monks' and seniors' voices bearing high
the pure sopranos of us younger ones,
who only half conceal our loneliness,
beginning this first year away from home.

A final Miserere and Oremus,
the choir has stopped, the organ groans and squeaks
and the prior, monks, and senior boys leave first.
We younger ones then follow close behind
towards corridors of raw sienna tile,
stone stairways to our beds beneath the cold
embrasures guarding tonsured bearded saints.

We flick for holy water. Over us,
between the font and door, a statue stands,
this Order's only saint—from Normandy—
whose picture hangs upon the wall at home
in Carmelite brown and white and holding, as
her statue here does too, a small bouquet
of flowers to her breast. And now I stretch,

taking my turn to press the statue's foot,
with its worn, damp satin feel, this amulet
that every boy before me here has touched.
The little toes are all silk-stropped away,
the instep worn to where the bone would be.
I've often wondered who the first boy was
who thought to reach and touch her foot this way,

what decades of the less than half-devout
had sought in plaster, worn like this to bone,
some superstition our religion bred,
more mystery to add to the mysteries
of bread and wine and candlelight and bells,
or in this gentle daughter of the church,
saw not saint, but sister, mother, girl.

Oliver Murray

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The Population of Hell

Avery Cardinal Dulles

Sometimes the complaint is heard that no one preaches about hell any longer. The subject of hell, if not attractive, is at least fascinating, as any reader of Dante's *Inferno* or Milton's *Paradise Lost* can testify. Equally fascinating, and decidedly more pressing, is the question of how many of us may be expected to go there when we die.

As we know from the Gospels, Jesus spoke many times about hell. Throughout his preaching, he holds forth two and only two final possibilities for human existence: the one being everlasting happiness in the presence of God, the other everlasting torment in the absence of God. He describes the fate of the damned under a great variety of metaphors: everlasting fire, outer darkness, tormenting thirst, a gnawing worm, and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus indicates that some will be condemned. The Son of man says to the goats: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). In the Gospel of John, which says comparatively little about hell, Jesus is quoted as saying: "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Father's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

The apostles, understandably concerned, asked: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Without directly answering their question Jesus replied: "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). In the parallel passage from Matthew, Jesus says: "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:13-14). In a parable immediately following this exchange, Jesus speaks of those who try to come to the marriage feast, but are told: "Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. There you will weep and gnash your teeth" (Luke 13:27-28). In another parable, that of the wedding guest who is cast out for not wearing the proper attire, Jesus declares: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Taken in their obvious meaning, passages such as these give the impression that there is a hell, and that many go there; more, in fact, than are saved.

The New Testament does not tell us in so many words that any particular person is in hell. But several statements about Judas can hardly be interpreted otherwise. Jesus says that he has kept all those whom the Father has given him except the son of perdition (John 17:12). At another point Jesus calls Judas a devil (John 6:70), and yet again says of him: "It would be better for that man if he had never been born" (Matthew 26:24; Mark 14:21). If Judas were among the saved, these statements could hardly be true. Many saints and doctors of the Church, including St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, have taken it as a revealed truth that Judas was reprobated. Some of the Fathers place the name of Nero in the same select company, but they do not give long lists of names, as Dante would do.

References to punishment after death in the remainder of the New Testament simply confirm the teaching of the Gospels. In the Book of Acts Paul says that those ordained to eternal life have believed his preaching, whereas those who disbelieved it have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46-48). Peter's First Letter puts the question: "If the righteous man is scarcely to

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be saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18). The Book of Revelation teaches that there is a fiery pit where Satan and those who follow him will be tormented forever. It states at one point: "As for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

The testimony of Paul is complex. In his First Letter to the Thessalonians he speaks of the coming divine judgment, in which Jesus will inflict vengeance "upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). In his epistle to the Romans Paul says that the impenitent Jews are storing up wrath for themselves on the day of judgment (Romans 2:5). In writing to the Corinthians he distinguishes between those who are being saved by the gospel and those who are perishing because of their failure to accept it (1 Corinthians 1:18). In a variety of texts he gives lists of sins that will exclude people from the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-6). And he tells the Philippians: "Work out your salvation in fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Some passages in the letters of Paul lend themselves to a more optimistic interpretation, but they can hardly be used to prove that salvation is universal. In Romans 8:19-21 Paul predicts that "creation itself will be set free from its bondage of decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God," but the text seems to refer to the world of nature; it does not say that all human beings will achieve the glorious liberty in question. In 1 Corinthians 15:28 Paul speaks of all things being ultimately subjected to Christ, but he does not imply that subjection means salvation. He presumably means that the demonic powers will ultimately be defeated. In Philippians 2:9-10 he predicts that eventually every knee will bow to Christ and every tongue confess him. But this need not mean a confession that proceeds from love. In the Gospels the devils proclaim that Jesus is the Holy One of God, but they are not saved by recognizing the fact.

Equally unavailing, in my opinion, are appeals to passages that say that God's plan is to reconcile all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:19-20). Although this is surely God's intent, He does not override the freedom that enables men and women to resist His holy will. The same may be said of the statement that God "desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Paul is apparently seeking to stimulate the apostolic zeal of missionaries who will bring the saving truth of Christ to all who do not yet believe. The absolute necessity of faith for salvation is a constant theme in the writings of Paul. I see no reason, then, for ranking Paul among the universalists.

The constant teaching of the Catholic Church supports the idea that there are two classes: the saved and the damned. Three general councils of the Church (Lyons I, 1245; Lyons II, 1274; and Florence, 1439) and Pope Benedict XII's bull *Benedictus Deus* (1336) have taught that everyone who dies in a state of mortal sin goes immediately to suffer the eternal punishments of hell. This belief has perdured without question in the Catholic Church to this day, and is repeated almost verbatim in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (*CCC* §1022, 1035). Several local councils in the Middle Ages, without apparently intending to define the point, state in passing that some have actually died in a state of sin and been punished by eternal damnation.

The relative numbers of the elect and the damned are not treated in any Church documents, but have been a subject of discussion among theologians. Among the Greek Fathers, Irenaeus, Basil, and Cyril of Jerusalem are typical in interpreting passages such as Matthew 22:14 as meaning that the majority will be consigned to hell. St. John Chrysostom, an outstanding doctor of the Eastern tradition, was particularly pessimistic: "Among thousands of people there are not a hundred who will arrive at their salvation, and I am not even certain of that number, so much perversity is there among the young and so much negligence among the old."

Augustine may be taken as representative of the Western Fathers. In his controversy with the Donatist Cresconius, Augustine draws upon Matthew and the Book of Revelation to prove that the number of the elect is large, but he grants that their number is exceeded by that of the lost. In Book 21 of his *City of God* he rebuts first the idea that all human beings are saved, then that all the baptized are saved, then that all baptized Catholics are saved, and finally that all baptized Catholics who persevere in the faith are saved. He seems to limit salvation to baptized believers who refrain from serious sin or who, after sinning, repent and are reconciled with God.

The great Scholastics of the Middle Ages are not more sanguine. Thomas Aquinas, who may stand as the leading representative, teaches clearly in the *Summa Theologiae* that God reprobates some persons. A little later he declares that only God knows the number of the elect. But Thomas gives reasons for thinking that their number is relatively small. Since our human nature is fallen, and since eternal blessedness is a gift far beyond the powers and merits of every created nature, it is to be expected that most human beings fall short of achieving that goal.

The leading theologians of the baroque period follow suit. Francisco Suarez, in his treatise on predestination,

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puts the question squarely: How many are saved? Relying on the Gospel of Matthew, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and Pope St. Gregory, he proposes the following estimation. If the question is asked about all men living between the creation and the end of the world, the number of the reprobate certainly exceeds that of the elect. This is to be expected because God was not rightly known before the coming of Christ, and even since that time many remain in darkness. If the term "Christian" is taken to include heretics, schismatics, and baptized apostates, it would still appear that most are damned. But if the question is put about those who die in the Catholic Church, Suarez submits his opinion that the majority are saved, since many die before they can sin mortally, and many others are fortified by the sacraments.

Suarez is relatively optimistic in comparison with other Catholic theologians of his day. Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, for example, were convinced that most of the human race is lost.

Several studies published by Catholics early in the twentieth century concluded that there was a virtual consensus among the Fathers of the Church and the Catholic theologians of later ages to the effect that the majority of humankind go to eternal punishment in hell. Even if this consensus be granted, however, it is not binding, because the theologians did not claim that their opinion was revealed, or that to take the opposite view was heretical. Nor is the opinion that most people attain salvation contradicted by authoritative Church teaching.

Mention should here be made of a minority opinion among some of the Greek Fathers. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa sometimes speak as though in the end all will be saved. Origen, the most prominent representative of this view, is generally reported as teaching that at the end of time, the damned, now repentant and purified, will take part in the universal restoration of all things (*apokatastasis*). Three centuries after Origen's death his views on this and several other topics were condemned by a local council of Constantinople convened by the Emperor Justinian in A.D. 563. Even in his lifetime, however, Origen claimed that his adversaries had misunderstood or misrepresented him. A number of distinguished scholars down through the centuries have defended his orthodoxy on the fate of the damned. The doctrine of the eternity of hell has been firmly in place at least since the seventh century, and is not subject to debate in the Catholic Church.

About the middle of the twentieth century, there seems to be a break in the tradition. Since then a number of influential theologians have favored the view that all human beings may or do eventually attain salvation. Some examples may be illustrative.

In a "reverie" circulated among friends but not published until after his death, the philosopher Jacques Maritain included what he called a "conjectural essay" on eschatology, in which he contemplates the possibility that the damned, although eternally in hell, may be able at some point to escape from pain. In response to the prayers of the saints, he imagines, God may miraculously convert their wills, so that from hating Him they come to love Him. After being pardoned, they will then be delivered from the pain of sense and placed in a kind of limbo. They will still be technically in hell, since they will lack the beatific vision, but they will enjoy a kind of natural felicity, like that of infants who die without baptism. At the end, he speculates, even Satan will be converted, and the fiery inferno, while it continues to exist, will have no spirits to afflict. This, as Maritain acknowledged, is a bold conjecture, since it has no support in Scripture or tradition, and contradicts the usual understanding of texts such as the parable of the Last Judgment scene of Matthew. But the theory has the advantage of showing how the Blood of Christ might obtain mercy for all spiritual creatures, even those eternally in hell.

Karl Rahner, another representative of the more liberal trend, holds for the possibility that no one ever goes to hell. We have no clear revelation, he says, to the effect that some are actually lost. The discourses of Jesus on the subject appear to be admonitory rather than predictive. Their aim is to persuade his hearers to pursue the better and safer path by alerting them to the danger of eternal perdition. While allowing for the real possibility of eternal damnation, says Rahner, we must simultaneously maintain "the truth of the omnipotence of the universal salvific will of God, the redemption of all by Christ, the duty of men to hope for salvation." Rahner therefore believes that universal salvation is a possibility.

The most sophisticated theological argument against the conviction that some human beings in fact go to hell has been proposed by Hans Urs von Balthasar in his book *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved?"* He rejects the ideas that hell will be emptied at the end of time and that the damned souls and demons will be reconciled with God. He also avoids asserting as a fact that everyone will be saved. But he does say that we have a right and even a duty to *hope* for the salvation of all, because it is not impossible that even the worst sinners may be moved by God's grace to repent before they die. He concedes, however, that the opposite is also possible. Since we are able to resist the grace of God, none of us is safe. We must therefore leave the question speculatively open, thinking primarily of the danger in which we ourselves stand.

At one point in his book Balthasar incorporates a long quotation from Edith Stein, now Saint Teresa

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Benedicta of the Cross, who defends a position very like Balthasar's. Since God's all-merciful love, she says, descends upon everyone, it is probable that this love produces transforming effects in their lives. To the extent that people open themselves to that love, they enter into the realm of redemption. On this ground Stein finds it possible to hope that God's omnipotent love finds ways of, so to speak, outwitting human resistance. Balthasar says that he agrees with Stein.

This position of Balthasar seems to me to be orthodox. It does not contradict any ecumenical councils or definitions of the faith. It can be reconciled with everything in Scripture, at least if the statements of Jesus on hell are taken as minatory rather than predictive. Balthasar's position, moreover, does not undermine a healthy fear of being lost. But the position is at least adventurous. It runs against the obvious interpretation of the words of Jesus in the New Testament and against the dominant theological opinion down through the centuries, which maintains that some, and in fact very many, are lost.

The conviction of earlier theologians that relatively few are saved rests, I suspect, partly on the assumption that faith in Christ, baptism, and adherence to the Church are necessary conditions for salvation. The first two of these conditions are clearly set forth in the New Testament, and the third has been taught by many saints, councils, popes, and theologians. But these conditions can be interpreted more broadly than one might suspect. In recent centuries it has become common to speak of implicit faith, baptism "by desire," and membership in the "soul" of the Church, or membership *in voto* ("by desire"). Vatican II declares that all people, even those who have never heard of Christ, receive enough grace to make their salvation possible.

The Church continues to insist that explicit faith, reception of the sacraments, and obedience to the Church are the ordinary means to salvation. Pius IX in the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) accordingly condemned the proposition: "We should at least have good hopes for the eternal salvation of those who are in no way in the true Church of Christ." Pius XII in his encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ (*Mystici Corporis*, 1943) taught that even those who are united to the Church by bonds of implicit desire—a state that can by no means be taken for granted—still lack many precious means that are available in the Church and therefore "cannot be sure of their salvation." Vatican II said that anyone who knows that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ and refuses to enter her cannot be saved. If we accept these teachings, we will find it unlikely that everyone fulfills the conditions for salvation.

Pope John Paul II in his *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* mentions the theory of Balthasar. After putting the question whether a loving God can allow any human being to be condemned to eternal torment, he replies: "And yet the words of Christ are unequivocal. In Matthew's Gospel he speaks clearly of those who will go to eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 25:46)." As justification for this assessment the Pope puts the rhetorical question: Can God, who is ultimate justice, tolerate terrible crimes and let them go unpunished? Final punishment would seem to be necessary to reestablish the moral equilibrium in the complex history of humanity.

In a General Audience talk of July 28, 1999, the Pope seems to have shifted his position, adopting in effect that of Balthasar. According to the English version of the text he said:

> Christian faith teaches that in taking the risk of saying "yes" or "no," which marks the (human) creature's freedom, some have already said no. They are the spiritual creatures that rebelled against God's love and are called demons (cf. Fourth Lateran Council). What happened to them is a warning to us: it is a continuous call to avoid the tragedy which leads to sin and to conform our life to that of Jesus who lived his life with a "yes" to God.
>
> Eternal damnation remains a possibility, but we are not granted, without special divine revelation, the knowledge of *whether or which* human beings are effectively involved in it. The thought of hell—and even less the improper use of biblical images—must not create anxiety or despair, but is a necessary and healthy reminder of freedom within the proclamation that the risen Jesus has conquered Satan, giving us the Spirit of God who makes us cry "Abba, Father!" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6)

The last sentence refers to the hope of Christians for their own salvation and cannot be used to support any theory of universal salvation. But the preceding sentence indicates at least an openness to the opinion that we may hope for the salvation of all.

Although the Pope may have abandoned his criticism of Balthasar, a number of theologians remain opposed. In a supplement to his book, Balthasar himself reports that one reviewer accused him of supporting "the salvation optimism that is rampant today and is both thoughtless and a temptation to thoughtlessness." At an international videoconference organized by the Holy See's Congregation for the Clergy last November, Jean Galot, with an apparent reference to Balthasar, said that the hypothesis of hell as a mere possibility "removes all effectiveness from the warnings issued by Jesus, repeatedly expressed in the

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Gospels." At the same conference Father Michael F. Hull of New York contended that Balthasar's theory is "tantamount to a rejection of the doctrine of hell and a denial of man's free will." In this country Fr. Regis Scanlon, O.F.M. Cap., accused Balthasar of being a Hegelian relativist who "smuggles into the heart of the Catholic a serious doubt about the truth of the Catholic faith." Scanlon himself takes it to be Catholic teaching that some persons, at least Judas, are in fact eternally lost. This article set off an epic controversy between two Catholic editors, Richard John Neuhaus and Dale Vree, both of whom came to Catholic Christianity as adults.

Neuhaus fired the opening salvo in the June/July 2000 issue of FIRST THINGS. Defending Balthasar against Scanlon, he cited the passages from the Pope's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* mentioned above and referred also to his own book, *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, in which he had argued from several New Testament texts that although we cannot be certain, we may indeed hope and pray for the salvation of all.

Dale Vree came back in the *New Oxford Review* with an article titled "If Everyone Is Saved . . . ," defending Regis Scanlon and rejecting Neuhaus' exegesis of the biblical texts he had quoted. He also claimed to have found a statement in Neuhaus' book that could be interpreted as implying that everyone will be saved.

Neuhaus responded in FIRST THINGS that Vree's attack was based on a misrepresentation. He had never taught the doctrine known as universalism, namely that all will be saved. He asserted only that we may hope that all will ultimately come to salvation. This probably should have been the end of the matter, but Vree in the May 2001 issue of *NOR* insisted that he had not misread Neuhaus' book and repeated his charges. Then, in its July/August 2001 issue, *NOR* published a defense of Neuhaus by Janet Holl Madigan which made serious charges against Vree and against *NOR* itself. Vree responded in the same issue.

The August/September 2001 issue of FIRST THINGS contained Neuhaus' own clarification of what he intended to say in his book. He presented an excellent case for holding that we may hope and pray for the salvation for all. In an October 2001 editorial in *NOR*, Vree expressed moderate satisfaction with Neuhaus' clarification, but still had objections to various statements that Neuhaus had not retracted.

Like Vree, I accept the substance of this final intervention of Neuhaus, but I find some obscurity in his argument. He says that certain Pauline texts (most of which I have cited above) "support" universal redemption. If we give priority to these passages, Neuhaus argues, we have to interpret the Gospel passages about damnation as "admonitory and cautionary, solemn warnings of a terrible possibility."

Neuhaus does not say (and, I am sure, does not mean) that Paul in the passages he quotes actually teaches universal salvation. If so, Paul would be turning the Gospel warnings into empty threats, and would be taking a position contrary to the constant tradition of the Church. I can agree that these "optimistic" passages, taken in isolation, could be interpreted as expressing a confidence that all will be saved. But that interpretation is unacceptable even as an interpretation of Paul's mind, because it runs counter to other texts, several of which I have quoted above, in which Paul evidently supposes that some are in fact lost. My conclusion would be that even if we give full value to the Pauline passages quoted by Neuhaus, the Gospel warnings could still be understood as predictions that some will be condemned.

Also contestable is Neuhaus' speculation that "perhaps the fate of Judas is that of total annihilation." The constant teaching of the Magisterium has been that unrepentant sinners are sent to eternal punishment. Judas must be in hell unless he repented.

It is unfair and incorrect to accuse either Balthasar or Neuhaus of teaching that no one goes to hell. They grant that it is probable that some or even many do go there, but they assert, on the ground that God is capable of bringing any sinner to repentance, that we have a right to hope and pray that all will be saved. The fact that something is highly improbable need not prevent us from hoping and praying that it will happen. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "In hope, the Church prays for 'all men to be saved' (1 Timothy 2:4)" (*CCC* §1821). At another point the Catechism declares: "The Church prays that no one should be lost" (*CCC* §1058).

One might ask at this point whether there has been any shift in Catholic theology on the matter. The answer appears to be Yes, although the shift is not as dramatic as some imagine. The earlier pessimism was based on the unwarranted assumption that explicit Christian faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. This assumption has been corrected, particularly at Vatican II. There has also been a healthy reaction against the type of preaching that revels in depicting the sufferings of the damned in the most lurid possible light. An example would be the fictional sermon on hell that James Joyce recounts in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This kind of preaching fosters an image of God as an unloving and cruel tyrant, and in some cases leads to a complete denial of hell or even to atheism.

Today a kind of thoughtless optimism is the more prevalent error. Quite apart from what theologians teach, popular piety has become saccharine. Unable to grasp the rationale for eternal punishment, many Christians take it almost for granted that everyone, or practically everyone, must be saved. The Mass for the

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Dead has turned into a Mass of the Resurrection, which sometimes seems to celebrate not so much the resurrection of the Lord as the salvation of the deceased, without any reference to sin and punishment. More education is needed to convince people that they ought to fear God who, as Jesus taught, can punish soul and body together in hell (cf. Matthew 10:28).

The search for numbers in the demography of hell is futile. God in His wisdom has seen fit not to disclose any statistics. Several sayings of Jesus in the Gospels give the impression that the majority are lost. Paul, without denying the likelihood that some sinners will die without sufficient repentance, teaches that the grace of Christ is more powerful than sin: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20). Passages such as these permit us to hope that very many, if not all, will be saved.

All told, it is good that God has left us without exact information. If we knew that virtually everybody would be damned, we would be tempted to despair. If we knew that all, or nearly all, are saved, we might become presumptuous. If we knew that some fixed percent, say fifty, would be saved, we would be caught in an unholy rivalry. We would rejoice in every sign that others were among the lost, since our own chances of election would thereby be increased. Such a competitive spirit would hardly be compatible with the gospel.

We are forbidden to seek our own salvation in a selfish and egotistical way. We are keepers of our brothers and sisters. The more we work for their salvation, the more of God's favor we can expect for ourselves. Those of us who believe and make use of the means that God has provided for the forgiveness of sins and the reform of life have no reason to fear. We can be sure that Christ, who died on the Cross for us, will not fail to give us the grace we need. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, and that if we persevere in that love, nothing whatever can separate us from Christ (cf. Romans 8:28-39). That is all the assurance we can have, and it should be enough. FT

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The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Heresy Hunter

David Singer

David Berger would seem an unlikely candidate for the role of heresy hunter. A mild-mannered professor of Jewish history at Brooklyn College and Yeshiva University, he has been a liberal advocate of tolerant pluralism within the ranks of Orthodox Judaism and a willing participant in theological dialogue with Christians. But in his recent book *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (2001), he has emerged as a would-be Torquemada on the Orthodox scene, demanding a policy of "intolerance" and "exclusion" toward those he deems to be heretical to Orthodoxy.

What has driven Berger to outrage—and what commends the interest even of those outside the world of Orthodox Judaism—are the messianic claims emanating from sectors of the Lubavitcher (also called "Chabad") movement of hasidic Jews. In a public campaign, groups of Lubavitcher hasidim have declared that their leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson—affectionately known as "the Rebbe"—is the long-awaited messiah of the Jewish people—and this despite the fact that Rabbi Schneerson died in June 1994. Some of the messianists allow that Rabbi Schneerson died, but insist that he will return from the grave to complete his messianic mission; others go further, claiming that the Rebbe is in fact alive; while still others contend that Rabbi Schneerson is not only the messiah, but a divine being. In all of this, the Christian motifs are obvious—and that is precisely what enrages Berger. He excoriates the Lubavitcher messianists as vile heretics, accusing them of undermining classic Jewish teaching about the messiah and facilitating Christian missionizing of the Jews. Berger simply refuses to accept hasidim who champion what he bitterly terms a "kosher-style Second Coming."

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The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference. By David Berger. *Littman Library. 195 pp. $29.50.*

The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference is Berger's report from the front lines of his war against the Lubavitcher messianists. The tone of the book is one of barely controlled hysteria, reflecting Berger's sense that he is all alone, fighting a rearguard action against a large and powerful enemy. Berger retains a "slender thread of hope that it is not too late," but he clearly expects the worst in his struggle with the messianists. Indeed, much of the book reads as if the struggle has already been lost. It is no accident that the last page of the book carries the title "Epitaph," and begins with the sentence: "The classical messianic faith of Judaism is dying." In his introduction, Berger states categorically that for "much of Orthodox Jewry, the classic boundaries of the messianic faith of Israel are no more"; still further, he observes that "virtually all Orthodox Jews [today] belong to a profoundly different religion from the one they adhered to in 1993."

Presented with such sweeping assertions about a group normally categorized as "ultra-Orthodox," we must raise a series of pointed questions: Are a majority of Lubavitcher hasidim in the messianist camp? Have the Lubavitcher messianists dramatically altered perspectives in the larger Orthodox community? Does the evidence truly point to a "scandal of Orthodox indifference?" And, most importantly, do the Lubavitcher messianists really have nothing worthwhile to teach Jews today?

As a trained historian, Berger could be expected to open up broad vistas on the Lubavitcher movement. In fact, however, his analysis is narrow in the extreme. The

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Lubavitcher messianists do not just occupy center stage in *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, they occupy the whole stage. Reading Berger's book, one would hardly know that the Lubavitcher brand of hasidism has a rich and fascinating history spanning more than two centuries. Berger does not mention the *Tanya*, a masterwork of Jewish mysticism written by Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of the Lubavitcher movement. Moreover, he passes over the role of dynastic succession in Lubavitch, which produced six outstanding leaders prior to the Rebbe. Even the hallmark missionary zeal of the Lubavitchers, which has made them familiar figures in far-flung Jewish communities, receives only passing reference. All in all, Berger's relentless focus on the messianist doings of the last several years produces a cartoon version of Lubavitcher history.

To gain an overview of the Lubavitcher movement we must look elsewhere. Menachem Friedman's brilliant essay "Chabad as Messianic Fundamentalism" is quite useful in this regard. (The essay can be found in *Accounting for Fundamentalism* [1994], University of Chicago Press, Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds.) The essay was written when Rabbi Schneerson was still alive but had suffered a stroke (this occurred in March 1993; the Rebbe died fifteen months later) that left him partially paralyzed and incapable of speech. For the Lubavitcher hasidim, this was a terrible time of testing, but for Friedman, as a sociologist of religion, it was an ideal moment to take the measure of Lubavitch. Friedman understood that, with Rabbi Schneerson near death, the Lubavitcher movement had reached a decisive turning point in its history. Friedman went so far as to express doubt that the Lubavitcher movement could "continue to exist without the bonding cement of the Rebbe." If Lubavitch did survive, Friedman confidently asserted, it would be as an "entirely different sect."

The Lubavitcher dynasty was founded by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady in the second half of the eighteenth century. From the very outset Lubavitch was characterized by a powerful sense of mission, a feeling engendered by Zalman's uphill struggle to advance the hasidic cause in his home base of White Russia. This region was a stronghold of the *mitnagdim*—rabbinic opponents of hasidism—and they actively conspired to have the Lubavitcher leader jailed by the Czarist police in 1798. Down to today, Lubavitcher hasidim tell and retell the story of the incarceration and release of Shneur Zalman, seeing in it proof positive of the need for constant struggle in spreading the message of Chabad. Thanks to Zalman's pioneering efforts, Friedman observes, "the concept of mission [became] a permanent factor in Chabad consciousness and practice."

Like other hasidic groups—Satmar, Belz, etc.—the Lubavitchers carry the name of the city—Lubavitch—that became the "capital" of their sect. But the Lubavitcher movement is also known by a second name—Chabad—that is derived from Shneur Zalman's theological masterpiece, the *Tanya*. (Chabad is an acronym formed from the first letters of the Hebrew words for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, the intellectual attributes of the Divine which, according to Zalman, are present in every Jew.) Within the ranks of Lubavitch, the *Tanya* is regarded as a sure guide to religious reality, a holy book in the fullest sense. As such, Friedman indicates, it generated a vast literature of commentary and super-commentary in which the teachings of Zalman were "explained, developed, and embellished." Friedman describes the long-term consequences in the following terms: "Chabad hasidism is based not only on the personal affinity of the hasid and his rebbe, but also on intensive study of written religious literature. This dimension of identity and a sense of belonging places Chabad on an intellectual plane and underscores its unique universal . . . character among the various hasidic movements."

Shneur Zalman, in dynastic fashion, was succeeded by his son Dov Baer, who was followed by his son-in-law Menachem Mendel and then, in turn, Mendel's own son Samuel. These three leaders consolidated Lubavitch as a movement, firming up its theological and institutional foundations. This was all to the good, since the lengthy period that followed—from the 1880s through the end of World War II and beyond—was one of unrelieved crisis. It was left to Sholom Dov Baer (son of Samuel) and Joseph Isaac (son of Shalom) to find a path forward for Lubavitch in response to the breakdown of traditional Jewish society, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, and the creation of the State of Israel.

Sholom Dov Baer's "presidency," as the Lubavitchers call it, coincided with dramatic changes in East European Jewish life. The impact of modernization in its various forms shattered the foundations of traditional Jewish society. In response, Sholom Dov Baer went on the offensive, declaring war on all manifestations of the new in Jewish life. Zionism, Jewish socialism, Jewish enlightenment, religious reform—all of these were condemned in the strongest terms. Sholom Dov Baer was convinced that the appearance on the historical stage of Jewish "enemies of the Lord" pointed to the impending coming of the messiah. But for the messianic end to actually come about, he firmly believed, it was first necessary to spread the message of Chabad throughout the Jewish world. Hence the founding in 1897 of the Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch yeshiva, whose students, the "pure ones," were trained to serve as movement emissaries. In sum, Sholom Dov Baer gave the Lubavitcher sense of mission a distinctly messianic cast.

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For all his efforts, Sholom Dov Baer was unable to halt the erosion of religious observance and authority even in his home territory of White Russia. At the symbolic level, this failure was signaled by the Chabad leader's departure from the town of Lubavitch in 1915. The Lubavitcher movement now entered an era of permanent "exile," with Joseph Isaac assuming the mantle of leadership during the terrible years of the Bolshevik revolution and the Holocaust. Joseph Isaac experienced the lash of communism and Nazism firsthand: in 1927, he was expelled from the Soviet Union for organizing underground Jewish education; in 1940, he fled Nazi-occupied Warsaw for the United States, leaving behind part of his family. Joseph Isaac's departure from Europe marks the nadir of the Lubavitcher movement, as Friedman indicates: "First, the Soviet revolution had totally undermined the status of Chabad in its birthplace and in the land where most of its hasidim lived. Then World War II had brought the annihilation of traditional religious Judaism throughout Eastern Europe. [Now] the rebbe had to flee to that 'different' America, modern and secular in character and nature."

At this point, Chabad theology came to the rescue of Lubavitch by providing a compelling rationale for Joseph Isaac's taking up residence in the United States: it was part of God's plan for the coming of the messiah. America, the Lubavitchers explained, was the mystical "lower hemisphere," a realm in which the Torah had not been given. But now Joseph Isaac had taken the audacious step of entering this realm, with the intention of promoting Chabad's message of religious observance. This transformative act, when brought to completion, the Lubavitchers asserted, was certain to usher in the final redemption. Thus, in a flash, outreach to non-Orthodox Jews in the United States became a central component of Lubavitcher messianism.

It was left to Joseph Isaac's son-in-law and successor Menachem Mendel Schneerson—the Rebbe—to fully operationalize Lubavitch outreach activities to non-Orthodox Jews. Friedman paints a fascinating picture of Rabbi Schneerson, who emerges as a figure of, indeed, messianic proportions. The Rebbe managed to combine exalted spirituality with the organizational skills of a Fortune 500 CEO. He achieved a complete mastery of Judaism's sacred texts, even as he pursued a secular education at the University of Berlin and the Sorbonne. Moreover, he came to the fore as the Lubavitcher leader in 1951 in part because of his secular credentials, but even more so because he claimed the ability to "speak" with his deceased father-in-law. What Friedman terms the Rebbe's "internal contradictions" gave him a larger-than-life aspect, adding greatly to his charisma.

As the head of the Lubavitcher movement, Rabbi Schneerson gave himself over entirely to a single cause: promoting religious observance among non-Orthodox Jews in the United States and, indeed, in the far reaches of the globe. Not surprisingly, these efforts aroused a strong sense of messianic expectation within the movement. This quickening of the messianic pulse was further strengthened by developments on the world stage, most especially the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the Gulf War. For the Lubavitchers, events in Russia had particular meaning, since the Communists were the sworn enemy of Chabad and had forcibly separated Joseph Isaac from his hasidim. From this vantage point, the death of communism had the stamp of the messiah written all over it; as Friedman notes, "the matter [had] been rectified and the circle . . . closed, with victory ultimately belonging to Chabad." As for the Gulf War, it was seen by the Lubavitchers as epitomizing the messianic era, since, to cite Friedman again, it was a conflict "in which Israel did not participate and in which Jews were not harmed."

Friedman tellingly observes that "messianic dynamics, by their very nature, must become increasingly active." Inevitably, then, the spiraling force of messianic expectation within Lubavitch became caught up with the question of the Rebbe's own standing as the possible messiah. Already in the 1970s various Chabad publications hinted that Rabbi Schneerson was the long-awaited messiah of the Jewish people. By the time that Friedman came to write his essay in 1993, he could state as a matter of course: "Today, virtually all Chabad hasidim recognize the Rebbe as the messiah and no longer hesitate to express their views in public." Rabbi Schneerson's response to this was ambivalent; at times he expressed anger at such talk, while at other times he acquiesced in it. What was crystal clear, however, was the Rebbe's own belief that the messianic dawn was at hand.

As Rabbi Schneerson entered his ninth decade and the final messianic breakthrough failed to occur, his followers increasingly found themselves walking a narrow bridge between hope and despair. The elements playing into this situation are well described by Friedman:

> The fact that the Rebbe has no children and has never groomed a successor from among his more distant relatives during his decades of "presidency" renders the issue of continuity of the Chabad dynasty a threatening question. The messianic response is virtually the only one capable of allaying these fears. . . . To the Chabad hasidim, the Rebbe's advanced age and the absence of an heir has become a somewhat paradoxical basis for messianic faith: if the Rebbe has no heir, then he must have no need

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> for one, for he is soon to reveal himself as the messiah, whom death cannot conquer.

Not long after Friedman wrote these words, the Rebbe died, on June 12, 1994, at age ninety-two. It is at this point that David Berger takes up his story.

With the stage now properly set, we may turn directly to a consideration of Berger's key claims. He makes four assertions in his book: a majority of Lubavitcher hasidim (the "Lubavitcher messianists") continue to maintain that Rabbi Schneerson is the messiah despite the fact that he is dead; the Lubavitcher messianists falsely argue that there are sources within Judaism that allow for a dead messiah; the Lubavitcher messianists have had a profound impact on the larger Orthodox community; the response of Orthodox leadership to the Lubavitcher messianists constitutes a "scandal of Orthodox indifference." Berger presses these claims with the zeal of a prosecuting attorney: he rails against the Lubavitcher messianists for "shattering . . . a core belief" of Judaism, and he denounces Orthodoxy at large for permitting "one of [Judaism's] key pillars to be undermined."

Berger is quite open about the special mix of influences that shapes his perspective on the Lubavitcher messianists. To begin with, there is Berger's personal faith: "I actually believe in the traditional messianic faith of Judaism. Anyone who does not . . . cannot generate the same level of concern about its deformation." Then there is Berger's professional involvement as an academic specializing in the history of Jewish-Christian debate and Jewish messianism: "[T]here is a tense, complex interplay between personal commitment and disinterested scholarship. . . . Seeing [Lubavitcher messianism] through a historical prism has alerted me to its capacity to refashion the parameters of Judaism. What others see as an episode, I see as a watershed." Finally, there is Berger's Jewish activism, which, in 1978, led him to coauthor a brilliant anti-missionary tract entitled *Jews and "Jewish Christianity"* (KTAV). Much of the argument in this pamphlet, Berger notes, "would have to be discarded . . . if Lubavitcher messianism became an acceptable variant of Orthodox Judaism." Across the board, then, Berger's approach to Lubavitcher messianism is strongly confrontational.

On the issue of how many Lubavitcher hasidim continue to believe that Rabbi Schneerson is the messiah, Berger is very impressive, basing his claims on solid investigative reporting. Nothing less than this will do, given the sharply opposed claims put forward by the two main Lubavitcher factions. On the one side are the "messianists," who assert that "virtually everyone believes [that Rabbi Schneerson is the messiah], even if some oppose public affirmations"; on the other side are the "non-messianists," who maintain that "the [messianists] are a very small number of mostly marginal hasidim of relatively recent vintage who know how to make noise and intimidate." Berger is alert to the fact that "statistical precision is elusive" in this area, since it is "dependent partly on the reading of minds." Still, a close examination of the issue leads him to conclude that a "large segment—almost certainly a substantial majority" of Lubavitcher hasidim are of the messianist persuasion.

Given the difficulties involved in gauging popular opinion, Berger wisely chooses to focus on key Lubavitcher institutions and leadership cadres. This avenue of approach yields the startling finding that opposition to messianism is limited in the main to Lubavitcher representatives working in local Jewish communities in the United States and, to some extent, in Israel. The rest of the field belongs nearly exclusively to the messianists, a large and dynamic element busy proselytizing its views. Here, for example, is Berger's description of the situation in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, the world center of Lubavitch:

> The central synagogue in 770 Eastern Parkway . . . is indisputably the headquarters of a messianic sect, where the [messianist] slogan is a regular component of the liturgy. A large sign displaying the [messianist slogan] adorns the front of the Lubavitch Women's Organization Headquarters in Crown Heights. Rabbi Shmuel Butman [a leading messianist] serves as Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Oholei Torah/Oholei Menachem in Crown Heights, the largest school for boys and young men, employs faculty who play prominent roles in messianist publications. . . . The head of Tomchei Temimin, another major men's yeshiva in Crown Heights, signed a messianist approbation to a major messianist book published in 1999, and a mentor there participated in its preparation. Machon Chanah, an important seminary for women, also in Crown Heights, teaches messianist doctrine to the point where a recent convert from Christianity left the school after a short while, complaining that this was what she had abandoned when accepting Judaism.

Extending his analysis to Israel, Europe, and beyond, Berger finds a situation still worse. Much of the evidence for this is derived from a messianist rabbinic ruling, issued in 1997, requiring all Jews to accept the messiahship of Rabbi Schneerson. Within a year, 150 Lubavitcher rabbis worldwide had endorsed the ruling, thus making it possible to take the measure of the messianist rabbinic elite. About the Israelis on the list, Berger tells us: "Many are identified as chief rabbis of cities,

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towns, or settlements. . . . Others are synagogue rabbis, judges in rabbinical courts, members of local offices of the rabbinate, [and] instructors in advanced yeshivas." The signatories from the former Soviet Union, Berger indicates, are "the leading Lubavitcher emissaries there. Their posts range from Moscow to Riga to Kazakhstan, from Tashkent to Rostov to Kishinev." In more general terms, Berger notes: "Messianism abounds in France, where . . . the head of a significant Lubavitch institution holds mass gatherings on the messiah . . . and coordinates programs with [messianists] in Antwerp and Brussels. [There is a] messianist head of the rabbinical court of Montreal. A fervent messianist sits on the non-Lubavitch rabbinical court of Sydney. In [London], the vice-president of the Chabad Community Center [insists] that 'every true Lubavitch' hasid is a messianist."

While Berger operates with the broad categories of messianist and non-messianist, he is careful to note the variations within both camps. These nuances are beautifully brought to the fore in the following passage:

> On one end, there are a relatively small number of hasidim who recognize that the Rebbe is not and will not be the messiah. Then there is a considerably larger group of those who say that he may or may not be. Among these, some add that he is the most likely candidate. In the fully messianist camp, there are both tactical and theological divisions. The tactical question is whether to proclaim this belief to the world or to keep it private because of the Rebbe's directive to publicize only those teachings that are likely to find a receptive audience. On the theological front, there are those who believe that the Rebbe died in a sense no different from any other righteous man, but will soon be resurrected to assume his messianic mantle. Others believe that he survives physically in a state that is at least in some sense transformed, while the remainder insist that there has been no change whatever.
>
> Cutting across these lines, there is the question of how to interpret the assertion, proffered by the Rebbe himself, that a rebbe is the Essence and Being of God. While even some non-messianists can and do maintain an understanding of this principle amounting to [idolatry], most of them have habits of mind that militate against a literal reading. Messianists, who begin with the belief that the messiah-rebbe is greater than Moses and the ministering angels, are much more likely to adopt [this idolatrous view].

Berger holds firm to the view that there is no place in Judaism for a dead messiah. This stance seems straightforward enough, but he manages to complicate it by casting his argument in terms of prooftexts. Again and again, he asserts that there is no textual basis in Jewish sources for the notion of a messiah coming from the dead, yet again and again he is forced to retreat on this point. To be sure, the number of prooftexts that the Lubavitcher messianists are able to cite in support of their view is small, but the mere fact that they exist is damaging to Berger's position.

Why, then, is Berger so preoccupied with the issue of prooftexts? The answer, I believe, is that it derives from Berger's involvement (both academic and personal) in Jewish-Christian debate, where prooftexts are a central bone of contention. It is worth noting in this context that the single longest chapter of Berger's anti-missionary pamphlet, *Jews and "Jewish Christianity,"* is entitled "'Proofs' of Christianity in the Hebrew Bible." Since for Berger, Christianity and Lubavitcher messianism are parallel phenomena, it makes perfectly good sense that he would maintain this emphasis on prooftexts when dealing with the latter. This turns out to be a serious tactical blunder.

Take Berger's admission that "two thousand years of messianic literature [has been] scoured [by the messianists] to find a handful of broadly relevant, though inapplicable, quotations (and several more irrelevant ones) to demonstrate that Judaism may countenance the belief in a messiah who returns from the dead." To which he appends the following remarkable footnote:

> Anyone impressed by the citations and arguments [of the messianists] should consider the following brief observations, which assume familiarity with those arguments:
>
> 1. Transmigration of souls is not resurrection.
>
> 2. Concealment, transferral to the lower Garden of Eden, or elevation to a heavenly location á la Moses or Elijah are not the same as death and burial. . . .
>
> 3. With respect to *Sanhedrin 98b*: according to the second interpretation in Rashi . . . the text is irrelevant to our issue. Even according to the first, which was surely a minority reading and is not presented as Rashi's own belief, one talmudic sage asserted that if the messiah will come from the dead, he will be Daniel, not someone like Daniel. . . .
>
> 4. A small minority of Jews believed that King David will return as the messiah, but this meant King David himself, not one of his descendants.
>
> 5. Even Jews who believed that King David would be the messiah (or the vanishingly tiny number who may have left open the possibility

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> that Daniel might be) did not believe that a Davidic figure born (or reborn) during or after their lifetime would begin the redemptive process only to die or be buried before its completion. Such a position is utterly alien to the most basic messianic posture of all non-Sabbatian Jews through the ages.

Berger's text and footnote make a strange pairing. In the text, Berger exudes confidence, using exactly one sentence to dispose of the messianist claim that there are sources within Judaism that allow for a dead messiah. In the footnote, Berger is nervous and uncertain, writing at great length about the messianist prooftexts, splitting hairs all along the way. What is going on here? The answer becomes clear later in the book, where he writes:

> One of my reservations about writing the article [on which this part of the book is based] . . . stemmed from reluctance to publicize the messianists' interpretation of the handful of rabbinic sources that they cite to buttress their doctrine. Some readers insufficiently anchored in a millennial Jewish consensus might, I feared, lose their moorings and conclude that belief in the Second Coming of the Rebbe is after all an acceptable option in Judaism. It was for this reason that I buried my response to those citations in a footnote encapsulating the key points and kept it brief, almost cryptic.

Berger may think that he "kept it brief," but his footnote in fact sticks out like a sore thumb. Perusing it, the fair-minded reader can only conclude that there are indeed a handful of Jewish sources that affirm the possibility of a messiah coming from the dead. The more Berger tries to deny this—and he devotes three full chapters to the subject—the more he appears to be engaging in a cover-up. All of this is quite unnecessary, since Berger could have rested his case against the Lubavitcher messianists with a simple invocation of what he himself terms the "millennial Jewish consensus" against belief in a dead messiah. In choosing to do battle with the messianists over each and every prooftext, Berger comes out on the losing end.

When it comes to his claim that the Lubavitcher messianists have had a major impact on the larger Orthodox community, Berger unfortunately shows signs of having been done in by an overheated imagination. Is it the case that "for much of Orthodox Jewry, the classic boundaries of the messianic faith of Israel are no more?" Certainly not. Have Orthodox Jews experienced a religious "earthquake" involving the "shattering of a core Jewish belief?" Certainly not. Is it true that "virtually all Orthodox Jews [today] belong to a profoundly different religion from the one they adhered to in 1993?" Certainly not. Berger's assertions in this regard go far beyond exaggeration; indeed, they stand reality on its head. Truth be told, the Lubavitcher messianists have had zero impact on the religious outlook of Orthodox society.

Evidence of the absurdity of Berger's claim is his silence about Orthodox "converts" to the belief system of the Lubavitcher messianists. Berger fails to cite even a single instance of a non-Lubavitch, Orthodox Jew suddenly embracing the view that Rabbi Schneerson, though dead, is indeed the long-awaited messiah of the Jewish people. The reason is simple: such individuals do not exist, at least as a statistical reality. On the very last page of his book, Berger finally makes a gesture toward acknowledging this when he notes in passing that "most Orthodox Jews . . . still adhere [to traditional Jewish teaching about the messiah]." But this very same page carries the title "Epitaph," and employs alarmist language about the "death throes of a fundamental belief" and "brink of extinction."

It is the occupational hazard of the heresy hunter to come to believe that he faces an all-powerful enemy who exerts vast influence. Clearly, Berger has fallen into this trap. Too bad, since what really needs explaining is why the messianists have not made any headway in the broader Orthodox community. A large part of the answer has to do with the impact of secularization. To the degree, however, that religious instinct is also involved, it is perfectly clear that non-Lubavitch, Orthodox Jews continue to violently recoil from any notion of a dead messiah. This instinct was honed in relationship to Christianity, and fully carries over into the way the masses of Orthodox Jews have responded to Lubavitcher messianism. Stressing this point is important because Berger would have us believe that the "messianic instincts of [Orthodox] Jews have atrophied" and that "what was once known to every Jewish tailor and shoemaker has, in the twinkling of an eye, become a matter of doubt for Orthodox rabbis." Fortunately, this is nonsense.

Berger's mention of Orthodox rabbis brings into focus the fourth of his claims: what he terms the "scandal of Orthodox indifference." The failure of these rabbis to take a firm stand against the Lubavitcher messianists has led, Berger argues, to a situation in which the "classical messianic faith of Judaism is dying." Berger notes: "Sectarians can establish sects; only the mainstream can transform a religion. . . . The messianists may have launched the assault, but Orthodox Jewry writ large has administered the fatal blow." Berger cannot abide the passivity of mainstream Orthodox leadership, the "remarkable equanimity with which the stan-

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dard-bearers of [Judaism] have allowed one of its key pillars to be undermined."

Berger's claim of Orthodox indifference does wonders for his ego, since it reinforces his sense of himself as a lone warrior against the Lubavitcher messianists. In fact, however, his claim is wildly overstated. To begin with, there is the inconvenient fact that the messianists have been denounced in various Orthodox quarters. On this point, I cite no less an authority than David Berger himself.

> In important respects, the belief has been delegitimated. The Rabbinical Council of America is on record. [So is] the Israeli Rabbinate. A number of the most important yeshivas in the world—Ponevezh, Telshe, Chofetz Chaim, Philadelphia, much of Lakewood, some of Ner Israel—have placed Lubavitch messianists . . . beyond the pale of Orthodoxy. . . . There are ad hoc prayer services in Jerusalem where messianists are not counted toward a quorum, and I have been told of a yeshiva in Brooklyn that threatens its students with expulsion if they pray in the messianist institution down the block.

How Berger can make this statement and at the same time talk about a scandal of indifference is a mystery.

Berger's reference to the Rabbinical Council of America in this context is both telling and ironic, since it was in response to Berger's direct appeal that the RCA passed a statement denouncing Lubavitcher-style messianism. Berger devotes a full chapter of his book to this subject, boasting of his intervention with what is in fact the largest Orthodox rabbinic organization in the world, and detailing the process by which it came to pass the following resolution: "In light of disturbing developments which have recently arisen in the Jewish community, the Rabbinical Council of America . . . declares that there is not and never has been a place in Judaism for the belief that Mashiach ben David [i.e., the messiah] will begin his messianic mission only to experience death, burial, and resurrection before completing it."

But for Berger, that resolution, however necessary, is not nearly enough. He calls for a "genuine communal policy" that will go beyond general denunciations of the messianist stance to the religious quarantine of individual messianists. "The most important principle," he declares, is that "no messianist should be treated as an Orthodox rabbi or functionary in good standing." He demands a "loyalty oath" of Lubavitcher hasidim suspected of being messianists, noting that "failure to follow this admittedly unpleasant procedure is an abdication of responsibility." Adding further to the atmosphere of a witch hunt, Berger calls for the dismissal of Lubavitcher messianists currently holding positions in the Orthodox community as congregational rabbis, Jewish educators, ritual slaughterers, or religious scribes. Berger insists that all this is "absolutely mandated by Jewish law" and "must be followed even in difficult cases."

Berger doesn't flinch from the irony of his position: "I am an advocate of tolerance urging intolerance, a believer in inclusiveness preaching exclusion, an adherent of unity fomenting division." Not once in *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* does Berger evince the slightest sympathy for the predicament of the Lubavitcher messianists, for the fact that they honestly believe that the Rabbi Schneerson is the messiah. In Berger's view, the messianists have only one option: to abandon their heretical belief.

Berger's indifference to the plight of the Lubavitcher messianists is only strengthened by his conviction that individuals can coerce themselves into proper religious belief. This remarkable position is set forth in autobiographical terms in a book review he published in 1993:

> In my mid-teens, I experienced periods of perplexity and inner struggle while reading works of biblical criticism. While I generally resisted arguments for the documentary hypothesis with a comfortable margin of safety, there were moments of deep turmoil. I have a vivid recollection of standing at an outdoor [sabbath service] in camp overwhelmed with doubts and hoping that God would give me the strength to remain an Orthodox Jew. What saved me was a combination of two factors: works that provided reasoned arguments in favor of traditional belief and the knowledge that to embrace the position that the Torah consists of discrete, often contradictory documents was to embrace not merely error but [heresy].

The implications of this for the Lubavitcher messianists are clear: they, too, can walk away from heresy if they only have the will.

Is Lubavitcher messianism without any redeeming merit? Berger's answer is an unequivocal yes, but there is reason to rethink the matter. Clearly, at the level of theology, the messianists have administered a jolt to Orthodox Judaism. The appearance on the Jewish scene of hasidim espousing a version of Second Coming theology is bizarre and disorienting. Still, under current conditions, the religious tremors it has set off may prove a boon for Orthodox belief. Let me explain.

Readers of Berger's book cannot fail to gain the impression that belief in the messiah is a central reli-

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gious concern of Orthodox Jews today. For the bulk of the Orthodox, however, this is just not so. Certainly in the "modern Orthodox" camp, which is Berger's home base, messianic expectation exists more as a verbal formula to be repeated than as a live religious option. (The non-Orthodox long ago abandoned belief in a personal messiah; they look instead to a messianic age.) The classic formulation of the Maimonidian principle—"I believe with complete faith in the coming of the messiah, and even though he may tarry I await him each day, hoping that he will come"—lacks existential meaning for a majority of Orthodox Jews in the contemporary context. This has everything to do with the impact of secularization, which has weakened the "plausibility structure" (the phrase is Peter Berger's) of all faith affirmations, and made the messianic hope seem like a pious dream. Ironically—and this returns us to a point made above—the very same process of secularization goes a long way toward explaining why the messianists have run into a stone wall in seeking non-Lubavitch, Orthodox converts to their position.

Seen from this perspective, the messianic fervor of the Lubavitchers—messianist and non-messianist alike—is a welcome indication that the religious juices continue to flow in Orthodox Judaism. This ties in with a crucially important point about the belief in the messiah made decades ago by the great German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig:

> The expectation of the coming of the messiah, by which and because of which Judaism lives, would be . . . empty babble, if the appearance again and again of a false messiah did not render it reality and unreality, illusion and disillusion. The false messiah is as old as the hope for the true messiah. He is the changing form of this changeless hope. He separates every Jewish generation into those whose faith is strong enough to give themselves up to an illusion, and those whose hope is so strong that they do not allow themselves to be deluded. The former are the better, the latter the stronger. The former bleed as victims on the altar of the eternity of the people, the latter are the priests who perform the service at this altar. And this goes on until the day when all will be reversed, when the belief of the believers will become truth, and the hope of the hoping a lie.

What Rosenzweig understood, and what Berger does not begin to comprehend, is that genuine longing for the coming of the messiah is bound to trigger periodic eruptions along the lines of Lubavitcher messianism. Simply put, this is the price of religious authenticity. Far worse than the disruptive presence of the Lubavitcher messianists on the current Orthodox scene would be their total absence. An Orthodox Judaism in which hope for the messiah remained permanently fixed at the level of pious affirmation would be nothing more than a religious mummy. Call them crazy, call them heretics, the Lubavitcher messianists bear powerful, if strange, witness to the continued vitality of Judaism's belief in the messiah. FT

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Life: Defining the Beginning by the End

Maureen L. Condic

What defines the beginning of human life? This question has been the topic of considerable legal and social debate over the years since the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision—debate that has only been intensified by the recent controversies over human embryonic stem cells and human cloning. Answers to this question run the full gamut from those who argue that life begins at conception (the view of more than one major world religion) to those arguing that babies are not to be considered fully human until a month after birth (the position of Princeton Professor of Bioethics Peter Singer).

The range of dissent and disagreement on the question of when human life begins has led many to believe it cannot be reasonably resolved in a pluralistic society. Courts have ruled that the diversity of opinion on the topic precludes a judicial resolution, requiring instead that the matter be addressed in the political arena, where accommodation of divergent views can be wrought through debate and compromise. Many Americans appear equally unwilling to impose a single interpretation on society, preferring instead to allow decisions regarding the beginning of life to be largely a matter of personal choice.

While reluctance to impose a personal view on others is deeply ingrained in American society, one must question the legitimacy of such reluctance when the topic of our "imposition" is a matter (quite literally) of life and death. Few beyond the irrationally obdurate would maintain that human embryos are anything other than biologically Homo sapiens and alive, even at the earliest developmental stages. Equally few would contest the fact that, at early stages of embryonic development, human embryos bear little resemblance to anything we easily identify as "human." For most people, reconciling these two facts involves the uncomfortably fuzzy process of drawing a line somewhere during the continuously changing process of human prenatal development and asserting: "There. That's when human life begins—at least for me." It is precisely the subjectivity and inaccuracy of this decision that fuels our discomfort at "imposing" it on others.

In contrast to the widespread disagreement over when human life begins, there is a broad social and legal consensus regarding when human life ends. Rarely has the point been made that the definition of human death can be applied to the question of when life commences with compelling symmetry. The definition of when life ends is both scientific and objective, and does not depend on personal belief or moral viewpoint. The current medical and legal understanding of death unambiguously defines both when human life ends and when it begins in a manner that is widely accepted and consistent with the legal and moral status of human beings at all stages of life.

Death is something most people readily recognize when they see it. People express very little confusion about the difference between a living person and a corpse. Surprisingly, however, the distinction is not as clear from a medical and scientific perspective. There is very little biologic difference between a living person in the instant before death and the body of that person an instant after death. Yet some property has clearly departed from the body in death, and that property is precisely the element that defines "human life." What, then, is the difference between live persons and dead ones? How is death defined medically and scientifically?

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The question of when and under precisely what conditions people are viewed as "dead" has itself been the subject of considerable debate. Traditionally, the medical profession considered a person dead when his heart stopped beating—a condition that rapidly results in the death of the cells of the body due to loss of blood flow. As the life-saving potential of organ transplants became increasingly apparent in the 1960s, the medical community undertook a reexamination of the medical standards for death. Waiting until the heart stops beating results in considerable damage to otherwise transplantable organs. After a long and contentious debate, a new standard of death was proposed in 1968 that defined "brain death" as the critical difference between living persons and corpses, a standard that is now widely (although not universally) accepted throughout the world.

Brain death occurs when there has been irreversible damage to the brain, resulting in a complete and permanent failure of brain function. Following the death of the brain, the person stops thinking, sensing, moving, breathing, or performing any other function, although many of the cells in the brain remain "alive" following loss of brain function. The heart can continue to beat spontaneously for some time following death of the brain (even hearts that have been entirely removed from the body will continue to beat for a surprisingly long period), but eventually the heart ceases to function due to loss of oxygen. The advantage of brain death as a legal and medical definition for the end of life is that the quality of organs for transplant can be maintained by maintaining artificial respiration. So long as oxygen is artificially supplied, the heart will continue to beat and the other organs of the body will be maintained in the same state they were prior to death of the brain.

Defining death as the irreversible loss of brain function remains for some a controversial decision. The fact that the cells and organs of the body can be maintained after the death of the individual is a disturbing concept. The feeling that corpses are being kept artificially "alive" as medical zombies for the convenient culture of transplantable organs can be quite discomforting, especially when the body in question is that of a loved one. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that this state of affairs is essentially no different from what occurs naturally following death by any means. On a cellular and molecular level, nothing changes in the instant of death. Immediately following death, most of the cells in the body are still alive, and for a time at least, they continue to function normally. Maintaining heartbeat and artificial respiration simply extends this period of time. Once the "plug is pulled," and the corpse is left to its own devices, the cells and organs of the body undergo the same slow death by oxygen deprivation they would have experienced had medical science not intervened.

What has been lost at death is not merely the activity of the brain or the heart, but more importantly the ability of the body's parts (organs and cells) to function together as an integrated whole. Failure of a critical organ results in the breakdown of the body's overall coordinated activity, despite the continued normal function (or "life") of other organs. Although cells of the brain are still alive following brain death, they cease to work together in a coordinated manner to function as a brain should. Because the brain is not directing the lungs to contract, the heart is deprived of oxygen and stops beating. Subsequently, all of the organs that are dependent on the heart for blood flow cease to function as well. The order of events can vary considerably (the heart can cease to function, resulting in death of the brain, for example), but the net effect is the same. Death occurs when the body ceases to act in a coordinated manner to support the continued healthy function of all bodily organs. Cellular life may continue for some time following the loss of integrated bodily function, but once the ability to act in a coordinated manner has been lost, "life" cannot be restored to a corpse—no matter how "alive" the cells composing the body may yet be.

It is often asserted that the relevant feature of brain death is not the loss of integrated bodily function, but rather the loss of higher-order brain activities, including consciousness. However, this view does not reflect the current legal understanding of death. The inadequacy of equating death with the loss of cognitive function can be seen by considering the difference between brain death and "persistent vegetative state" or irreversible coma. Individuals who have entered a persistent vegetative state due to injury or disease have lost all higher brain functions and are incapable of consciousness. Nonetheless, integrated bodily function is maintained in these patients due to the continued activity of lower-order brain centers. Although such patients are clearly in a lamentable medical state, they are also clearly alive; converting such patients into corpses requires some form of euthanasia.

Despite considerable pressure from the medical community to define persistent vegetative state as a type of brain death (a definition that would both expand the pool of organ donors and eliminate the high medical costs associated with maintaining people in this condition), the courts have repeatedly refused to support persistent vegetative state as a legal definition of death. People whose bodies continue to function in an integrated manner are legally and medically alive, despite their limited (or absent) mental function. Regardless of how one may view the desirability of maintaining patients in a persistent vegetative state (this being an entirely distinct moral and legal question), there is

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unanimous agreement that such patients are not yet corpses. Even those who advocate the withdrawal of food and water from patients in persistent vegetative state couch their position in terms of the "right to die," fully acknowledging that such patients are indeed "alive." While the issues surrounding persistent vegetative state are both myriad and complex, the import of this condition for understanding the relationship between mental function and death is clear: the loss of integrated bodily function, *not* the loss of higher mental ability, is the defining legal characteristic of death.

What does the nature of death tell us about the nature of human life? The medical and legal definition of death draws a clear distinction between living cells and living organisms. Organisms are living beings composed of parts that have separate but mutually dependent functions. While organisms are made of living cells, living cells themselves do not necessarily constitute an organism. The critical difference between a collection of cells and a living organism is the ability of an organism to act in a coordinated manner for the continued health and maintenance of the body as a whole. It is precisely this ability that breaks down at the moment of death, however death might occur. Dead bodies may have plenty of live cells, but their cells no longer function together in a coordinated manner. We can take living organs and cells from dead people for transplant to patients without a breach of ethics precisely because corpses are no longer living human beings. Human life is defined by the ability to function as an integrated whole—not by the mere presence of living human cells.

What does the nature of death tell us about the *beginning* of human life? From the earliest stages of development, human embryos clearly function as organisms. Embryos are not merely collections of human cells, but living creatures with all the properties that define any organism as distinct from a group of cells; embryos are capable of growing, maturing, maintaining a physiologic balance between various organ systems, adapting to changing circumstances, and repairing injury. Mere groups of human cells do nothing like this under any circumstances. The embryo generates and organizes distinct tissues that function in a coordinated manner to maintain the continued growth and health of the developing body. Even within the fertilized egg itself there are distinct "parts" that must work together—specialized regions of cytoplasm that will give rise to unique derivatives once the fertilized egg divides into separate cells. Embryos are in full possession of the very characteristic that distinguishes a living human being from a dead one: the ability of all cells in the body to function together as an organism, with all parts acting in an integrated manner for the continued life and health of the body as a whole.

Linking human status to the nature of developing embryos is neither subjective nor open to personal opinion. Human embryos are living human beings precisely because they possess the single defining feature of human life that is lost in the moment of death—the ability to function as a coordinated organism rather than merely as a group of living human cells.

What are the advantages of defining the beginning of human life in the same manner that we define its end, based on the integrated organismal function of human beings? To address this question, the alternative arguments regarding when life begins must be briefly considered. While at first inspection, there appear to be many divergent opinions regarding when human life commences, the common arguments are only of three general types: arguments from form, arguments from ability, and arguments from preference. The subjective and arbitrary nature of these arguments stands in stark contrast to the objective and unambiguous definition that organismal function provides for both the beginning and end of human life.

Of all the arguments regarding when human life begins, the most basic, and perhaps most intuitive, is that to be human, one must *look* human. Early human embryos are often described as "merely a ball of cells," and for many, it is difficult to imagine that something that looks more like a bag of marbles than a baby could possibly be a human being. Fundamentally, this argument asserts that human life is worthy of respect depending on appearance. When plainly stated, this conclusion is quite disturbing and also quite problematic. What level of malformation are we willing to accept before we revoke the right to continued existence? How are we to view children whose mature form will not be completely manifest until puberty? Form alone is a profoundly trivial and capricious basis for assigning human worth, and one that cannot be applied without considerable and obvious injustice.

The superficiality of equating worth with form is sufficient for most to reject this argument and retreat to a functional definition: form per se is not the issue; rather, it is the ability to function as a human being that defines the beginning of human life. Human beings are capable of a number of distinctive functions (self-awareness, reason, language, and so forth) that are acquired gradually over prenatal life as development proceeds. Therefore, the argument goes, human worth is also gradually acquired, with early embryos being less human than more developed fetuses.

A number of seemingly independent arguments regarding when life begins are in fact variations on this argument from ability. Thus, the proposal that human life begins when the fetus becomes "viable," or capable of surviving outside of the womb, is a subset of the abili-

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ty argument that gives conclusive weight to the suite of abilities required for survival independent of the mother. Similarly, the common argument that embryos are human when they are in the womb of the mother (where they can develop into babies), while embryos generated in the laboratory are not, is also a variation on the ability argument that equates developmental ability with human life and worth.

While the argument from ability is less superficial than the argument from form alone, it is no less problematic. As noted above, functional definitions have been repeatedly rejected as a legal basis for the definition of death, in part due to their arbitrary nature. One can certainly identify any number of elderly and disabled people who are less functionally adept than newborn infants—and perhaps even late-term fetuses. While Western culture has a strong tradition of meritocracy, providing greater economic and social rewards to those who demonstrate greater achievement, basic human rights are not meted out according to performance. Unless we are willing to assign "personhood" proportionate to ability (young children, for example, might be only 20 percent human, while people with myopia 95 percent), the limited abilities of prenatal humans are irrelevant to their status as human beings.

The final and perhaps the most emotionally compelling argument for assigning human status to a developing embryo is the extent to which parents desire a child. Yet the argument from being wanted, which equates status as a human being with the desire of a second party who has the power to confer or deny that status, essentially reduces the definition of a human being to a matter of preference. You are human because I choose to view you that way. The fact that human status can be positively conferred for "wanted" embryos as well as denied for the "unwanted" illustrates the fundamental arbitrariness of this argument. The preferences of individuals who possess the power to impose them on others are hardly a compelling basis for legislation on human life.

Despite the apparent diversity of views regarding when human life begins, the common arguments thus reduce to three general classes (form, ability, and preference), all of which are highly subjective and impossible to reconcile with our current legal and moral view of postnatal human worth. It is, in fact, the subjectivity and inconsistency of these views, rather than their diversity, that makes them so unsatisfying as a basis for legislation on human life.

Unlike other definitions, understanding human life to be an intrinsic property of human organisms does not require subjective judgments regarding "quality of life" or relative worth. A definition based on the organismal nature of human beings acknowledges that individuals with differing appearance, ability, and "desirability" are, nonetheless, equally human. It is precisely the objective nature of such a definition (compared to vague "quality of life" assessments) that has made organismal function so compelling a basis for the legal definition of death.

Once the nature of human beings as organisms has been abandoned as the basis for assigning legal personhood, it is difficult to propose an alternative definition that could not be used to deny humanity to virtually anyone. Arguments that deny human status to embryos based on form, ability, or choice can be readily turned against adult humans who have imperfect form, limited ability, or who simply constitute an inconvenience to more powerful individuals or groups. Indeed, such arguments can be quite protean in their ability to deny rights to anyone not meeting an arbitrary criterion for humanity. Abraham Lincoln made this very point regarding arguments based on form, ability, and choice that were put forth in his day to justify the institution of slavery:

> It is *color*, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own.
>
> You do not mean *color* exactly? You mean the whites are *intellectually* the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore, have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own.
>
> But, say you, it is a question of *interest*; and, if you can make it your *interest*, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you.

Postnatal humans run very little risk that embryos will someday organize politically to impose restrictions on the rights of "the born." However, once society has accepted a particular justification for denying rights to one class of individuals, the same justification can readily be applied to other classes by appealing to the simple argument: "Society has *already determined* that form, ability, or preference defines human life and thereby restricts human rights. Why should the same standard not be applied in this case?" In American society and jurisprudence, arguments from accepted precedent carry great emotional and legal force. Society must determine whether it is willing to accept the current subjective and arbitrary basis for determining the status of prenatal human beings as a legitimate precedent for future legislation on human rights.

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Embryos are genetically unique human organisms, fully possessing the integrated biologic function that defines human life at all stages of development, continuing throughout adulthood until death. The ability to act as an integrated whole is the *only* function that departs from our bodies in the moment of death, and is therefore the defining characteristic of "human life." This definition does not depend on religious belief or subjective judgment. From the landmark case of Karen Ann Quinlan (1976) on, the courts have consistently upheld organismal function as the legal definition of human life. Failure to apply the same standard that so clearly defines the end of human life to its beginning is both inconsistent and unwarranted.

The conclusion that human life is defined by integrated (organismal) function has wide-reaching implications, both political and moral. While the public domain has limited authority to promote morality, it does have both the power and the responsibility to prevent harm to individuals. A consistent definition of what constitutes human life, both at its beginning and at its end, requires that current legislation dealing with prenatal human life be considered in light of both biological fact and accepted legal precedent regarding the definition of human life. If current legislation enables and supports the killing of human beings based on a scientifically flawed understanding of human life, laws can and should be revised. Clearly, such a revision would not be without political cost. Yet allowing life-or-death decisions to be based on arbitrary or capricious definitions is also a course of action that is not without considerable social and moral cost. FT

My Brother's Photos Before Okinawa

The giggling boy in the picture is me,
riding my brother's shoulders
like a stallion with massive flanks,
unable to fall. My pudgy fists turned him,
cupping his ears like reins. Head ducked,

he looks up at the camera, lips whinnying,
as if saying whenever I held the photo,
Wasn't this fun?—taped in a scrapbook
by this pose of him in the paper
after boot camp in World War Two,

my hero, local marine overseas.
More shots of him with buddies before battles,
rifle slung over his shoulder in one,
muscles where I used to ride, his prance
and big-brother whinny just for me.

Walt McDonald

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Books In Review

The Wrong Target?

On the Natural History of Destruction. By W. G. Sebald. *Translated by Anthea Bell. Random House. 202 pp. $23.95.*

***Reviewed by* Damon Linker**

In the summer of 1943, the British Royal Air Force (with support from the Eighth Army Air Force of the United States) flew a series of raids on Hamburg, Germany. Dubbed "Operation Gomorrah," the bombing missions did not target factories or fuel installations, railway junctions or transportation arteries. Their aim, in the words of acclaimed German novelist and essayist W. G. Sebald, "was to destroy the city and reduce it as completely as possible to ashes."

On one such raid, early in the morning of July 27, ten thousand tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs were intentionally dropped on the city's densely populated residential districts. Twenty minutes after the bombing commenced, the city was engulfed by flames rising a mile into the air. As Sebald writes in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, the inferno consumed so much oxygen so quickly that it stirred up hurricane-force winds that "lifted gables and roofs from buildings, flung rafters and entire advertising billboards through the air, tore trees from the ground, and drove human beings before it like living torches." A few hours later, as smoke continued to pour from the smoldering ruins, survivors surveyed a scene of stunning desolation:

> Horribly disfigured corpses lay everywhere. Bluish little phosphorous flames still flickered around many of them; others had been roasted brown or purple and reduced to a third of their normal size. They lay doubled up in pools of their own melted fat, which was sometimes already congealed. . . . [C]lumps of flesh and bone or whole heaps of bodies had cooked in the water gushing from bursting boilers. Other victims had been so badly charred and reduced to ashes by the heat, which had risen to a thousand degrees or more, that the remains of families consisting of several people could be carried away in a single laundry basket.

The horror in Hamburg that day was hardly unique; Allied bombs targeted 131 German cities and towns during World War II, killing a total of 600,000 civilians and leaving 7.5 million people homeless. Indeed, it is the near ubiquity of such experiences in Germany during the final years of the war—and the subsequent silence about them at all levels of German culture after 1945—that interests, even obsesses, Sebald in this, what would prove to be his final, book (he died in December 2001).

The core of *On the Natural History of Destruction* is a lengthy essay based on a series of highly controversial lectures that Sebald delivered in Zürich in 1997 on the subject of "Air War and Literature." The German edition of the book, which took its title from these lectures, combined this adaptation with a much shorter essay on the postwar attempts of the writer Alfred Andersch to conceal his own morally compromised actions and attitudes during the Third Reich. The English translation includes these pieces and adds two additional brief essays, written earlier in Sebald's career, on two writers—Jean Améry and Peter Weiss—who, in his view, more successfully confronted their own painful pasts.

For all of its power and persuasiveness, the resulting two-hundred-page book never quite fulfills the expectations set by the overly broad and faintly pretentious title chosen by Sebald's American publisher (based on a passing comment in the lead essay). Far from offering us a "natural history" of the "destruction" wrought by the total wars of the modern age, Sebald's more modest (though still ambitious) goal is to ponder the often subterranean effects of such destruction on a single culture. *On the Natural History of Destruction* is first and foremost a book about Germany.

And it is a chilling one. Sebald's lengthy opening chapter uses a detached, documentary style to recount a representative handful of gruesome stories from the last years of the war. We learn of how bombed-out cities quickly became so infected with flies and "slippery, finger-length maggots" that flamethrowers had to be used to disperse them. We hear about the supposedly bomb-proof bunker sheltering 1,400 civilians that received a direct hit, leaving behind "mountains of corpses, some completely dismembered." And, most devastating of all, we are told of half-deranged, traumatized women who, desperately fleeing the carnage, carried with them suitcases filled with the charred remains of their children.

Much of the controversy surrounding Sebald's original lectures was generated by the charge that he focused so resolutely on such hellish details in order to blame the Allies for the immense suffering they caused the German people (as did, for example, the Communist government of East Germany, which readily described the Allied bombing as an attempted "extermination" [*Vernichtung*] of the Germans). Such charges are groundless. Sebald knows full well that the Nazis set the murderous violence in

Damon Linker *is Associate Editor of* First Things.

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motion—and that they would have done as bad or worse to their enemies if they could have. The blame in the book—and there is quite a lot of it—is reserved, not for Great Britain and the United States, but for Sebald's fellow Germans.

Sebald effectively eviscerates numerous authors and visual artists for producing works of kitsch and cheap sentimentality when they set out to think about the experience of the war. None is dealt with more mercilessly than Andersch, who wrote a series of books in which, through "tactful omissions and other revisions," he actively dodged the truth about his own and his country's past. But at least Andersch and the others made some attempt, however inadequate, to contemplate the events they endured. Much more offensive, in Sebald's view, is the thoroughgoing evasiveness of countless Germans who chose not to reflect on or otherwise keep alive the terrible memory of those years.

In pressing this argument, Sebald contributes to a uniquely German genre of literary and social criticism—one that first emerged in the years immediately following the war and gained considerable influence and attention for its role in motivating the student revolts of the late 1960s. That Sebald's lectures sparked such controversy testifies to its continued ability to generate headlines. The writers and intellectuals who have contributed to this form of criticism have lodged many charges against the German people, but they can be boiled down to one: Germany has failed, will likely continue to fail, but must nevertheless strive ever harder not to fail in the ongoing process of "coming to terms with the past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). Never has a society attacked itself so relentlessly for failing to attack itself with adequate relentlessness.

The charge that from 1933 to 1945 Germany largely cut itself off from the moral content of the common human world in order to pursue a particularistic extra-moral enterprise is obviously true. As is the accusation that certain members of German high culture emerged from the experience of National Socialism and total war utterly incapable of comprehending the madness that had gripped the nation for over a decade. Historian Friedrich Meinecke's 1946 statement that the rise of Nazism could be traced to a failure of the German people to read sufficient quantities of Goethe stands as one example of such incomprehension; philosopher Mar-

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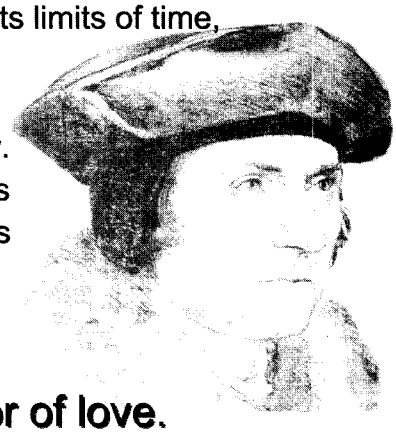

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tin Heidegger's 1953 affirmation of the "inner truth and greatness of National Socialism" exhibits another.

Yet Sebald's hostility to his fellow Germans is noteworthy, if not in its intensity, then at least in its object. Rather than directing his ire at those Nazi party members, apologists, and fellow travelers who failed to confront their role in contributing to the functioning of the National Socialist state, as most critics have done, Sebald chooses to rail against ordinary German civilians who suffered enormous, almost unspeakable, pain and hardship in the cataclysm unleashed by Hitler—and then had the audacity to go on with their lives.

In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche describes a human drive toward "active forgetfulness" that serves as "a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette." Without this power of forgetting the ugliness in human life, "there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*." Whether or not we accept that such an "apparatus of repression" is necessary to protect us from the supposed horrors of human existence in general, it is surely true that for those who lived through the kinds of events that Sebald so searingly recounts in his book, such a capacity was a minimum requirement for continuing to function and thrive, even to continue living at all.

At moments, Sebald seems to recognize this and shows sympathy for those survivors who did not devote what remained of their lives to mulling over the suffering they endured (and, in some cases, inflicted). Yet, more often than not, he treats these same individuals with contempt, turning a more admiring eye toward those few who insisted on living in the constant, blinding light of what he calls "reality"—by which he really means the outer limits of human experience and endurance that, for a brief, awful time in history, became the norm. Hence his veneration for the work of Jean Améry, in many ways the hero of the book, who, like Primo Levi, died by suicide after several years of engaging in precisely the form of fixated scar-gazing that Sebald advocates.

Sebald never clarifies why he thinks it wise or admirable to follow Améry's example (especially for those who, like Sebald himself, born in 1944, did not experience much hardship from the war first-hand). Indeed, judging from the evidence of Sebald's own book, such dogged devotion to the commemoration of suffering does not necessarily lead to clarity of historical or moral thinking. Toward the end of his moving chapter on Peter Weiss, for example, Sebald wonders if the attempt to represent unspeakable cruelty in literature is a pointless pursuit, since, he asserts, "our species is unable to learn from its mistakes." The same outlook can be detected at points in the opening essay. Writing of Sir Arthur Harris, commander-in-chief of the British Bomber Command during World War II and the man responsible for prosecuting the fire-bombing of German cities, Sebald concludes that, in his attachment to "destruction for its own sake," Harris was in "perfect sympathy with the innermost principle of every war, which is to aim for as wholesale an annihilation of the enemy with his dwellings, his history, and his natural environment as can possibly be achieved."

To this non-German, the pitch-black pessimism of both statements seems profoundly ill-considered. Surely the dramatic swing on the part of the German state since 1945 from the purest militarism to near-total pacifism shows that its citizens have learned quite a lot from their mistakes—perhaps even a bit too much. Then there is Sebald's view regarding the "innermost principle of every war." Looking back on the last ninety years from the standpoint of the present, we find reason to hope that the indiscrimi-

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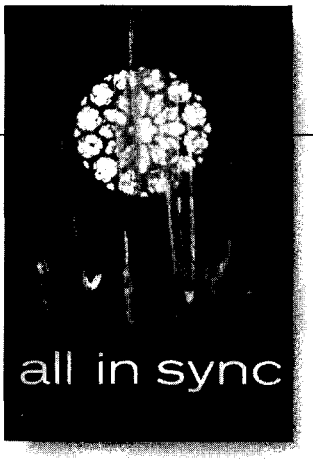

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nate brutality that so often marked warfare during that period has finally become a thing of the past, at least on the part of the West. Something that looks suspiciously like moral progress, along with advances in military technology, has restored the traditional distinction between soldiers and civilians that was lost during the bloody middle decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, America's current "war on terror" can be understood as the attempt to uphold such hard-won moral distinctions against an enemy that refuses to abide by them—and, like the Nazis, treats that refusal as a badge of honor.

But Sebald appears not to see such subtleties; in the glare of the fires of Hamburg, it seems, all cows are black. Which is a pity, for there is much to admire in his final book—above all, the quiet power, and the pathos, of its prose (even in translation). Yet surely when a book ends up making the case for a position that is diametrically opposed to the one that the author intends it to make, this must be judged a defect. *On the Natural History of Destruction*, an enormously eloquent and passionate brief for greater German attention to its past, ultimately shows that Germany requires no such thing.

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What Thinking Means

THE MIND AND THE BRAIN: NEUROPLASTICITY AND THE POWER OF MENTAL FORCE. By JEFFREY SCHWARTZ and SHARON BEGLEY. *HarperCollins. 432 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* William A. Dembski**

IN THE EPILOGUE to Jeffrey Schwartz and Sharon Begley's *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force*, we read: "Finally, after a generation or more in which biological materialism has had neuroscience—indeed, all the life sciences—in a chokehold, we may at last be breaking free. . . . Biological materialism did and does have real-world consequences. We feel its reach every time a pharmaceutical company tells us that, to cure shyness (or 'social phobia'), we need only reach for a little pill. . . . Biological materialism is nothing if not appealing. We need not address the emotional or spiritual causes of our sadness to have the cloud of depression lift; we need not question the way we teach our children before we can rid them of attention deficit disorder."

Schwartz, a research professor in psychiatry at UCLA, is convinced that the life sciences as a whole and neuroscience in particular have been subverted by materialist philosophy. (Because the book centers on Schwartz's research and thought, I shall refer to him as the primary author of the book.) *The Mind and the Brain* is his attempt to unseat that philosophy and substitute a dualist conception of mind (according to which mind and brain are ontologically distinct). Anyone familiar with current discussions of neuroscience, consciousness studies, and the mind-body problem will realize just how fiercely materialistic and non-dualist these fields are. Schwartz's explicit antimaterialism and embrace of dualism therefore places him very much at odds with the scientific and philosophical mainstream.

Schwartz provides a nonmaterialist interpretation of neuroscience and argues that this interpretation is more compelling than the standard materialist interpretation. He arrived at this position as a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). OCD sufferers recognize obsessive-compulsive thoughts and urges as separate from their intrinsic selves. For instance, after a few washings, the compulsive hand-washer realizes that his hands are clean and yet feels driven to keep washing them. It was reflection on this difference between the obvious truth (the hands are clean) and the irrational doubts (they might still be dirty) that prompted Schwartz to reassess the philosophical underpinnings of neuroscience.

From brain scans, Schwartz found that certain regions in the brain of OCD patients (the caudate nucleus in particular) exhibited abnormal patterns of activity. By itself this finding is consistent with a materialist view of mind (if, as materialism requires, the brain enables the mind, then abnormal patterns of brain activity are likely to be correlated with dysfunctional mental states). Nonetheless, having found abnormal patterns of brain activity, Schwartz then had OCD patients engage in intensive mental

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effort through what he called relabeling, reattributing, refocusing, and revaluing (the 4 Rs). In the case of compulsive hand-washing, this involved a patient acknowledging that his hands were in fact clean (relabeling); attributing anxieties and doubts about his hands being dirty to a misfunctioning brain (reattributing); directing his thoughts and actions away from handwashing and toward productive ends (refocusing); and, lastly, understanding at a deep level the senselessness of OCD messages (revaluing).

Schwartz documents not only that patients who undertook this therapy experienced considerable relief from OCD symptoms, but also that their brain scans indicated a lasting realignment of brain-activity patterns. Thus, without any intervention directly affecting their brains, OCD patients were able to reorganize their brains by intentionally modifying their thoughts and behaviors. The important point for Schwartz here is not simply that modified thoughts and behaviors permanently altered patterns of brain activity, but that such modifications resulted from, as he calls it, "mindful attention"—conscious and purposive thoughts or actions in which the agent adopts the stance of a detached observer.

AFTER REVIEWING his own research on OCD in the early part of the book, Schwartz devotes its middle half to summarizing the last twenty years of research on neuroplasticity. This research is very exciting, and Schwartz and Begley's description of it is worth the price of the book. There is a long tradition in neuroscience that sees neural circuits as laid down early in life, after which they become entrenched and any subsequent disruption leads to irrevocable deficits. Reviewing research over the last twenty years, Schwartz shows that this view is false and that the brain remains plastic throughout life. A key implication is that conditions previously thought to be untreatable are in fact treatable. Thus Schwartz describes how neuroplasticity offers real hope to everyone from stroke victims to dyslexics.

For instance, 600,000 people in the United States suffer a stroke each year. Of these, a quarter die immediately and half are left seriously disabled. On the assumption that neural circuitry is hardwired early in life and thereafter fixed, there is no reason to think that stroke victims experiencing serious disabilities should see any marked improvement. Like a shattered piece of china whose beauty cannot be reconstructed, there would seem to be no way to recover brain

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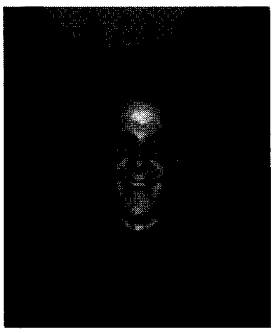

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function once it has been lost. But Schwartz shows that this view is erroneous. Granted, damaged portions of the brain may never recover. But undamaged portions may be "rezoned," and functions previously assigned to the damaged portions may be "reallocated" to the rezoned portions.

This view of the brain has radical implications for treatment. If the brain as a matter of course loses plasticity early in life, then the proper counsel for seriously disabled stroke victims is resignation. But if the brain retains its plasticity throughout life, then the proper counsel is a therapy that will help rezone and reallocate portions of the brain.

What does all this have to do with materialism? If materialism is correct, then mentation is the product of brain processes (much as digestion is the product of stomach processes, to use an analogy proposed by the philosopher John Searle). But this would mean that even though the brain can readily affect the mind, there's no sense in which the mind can affect the brain except by way of the brain. That is, top-down causation in which the mind affects the brain must invariably presuppose bottom-up causation of the brain first affecting the mind. And yet Schwartz clearly shows that a conceptual act with no clear physiological underpinnings (for instance, the conscious decision by an OCD sufferer to implement the 4-R therapy) can dramatically and lastingly alter patterns of brain activity. And in such cases, top-down causation seems to operate without prior bottom-up causation.

Is this a good argument for mind being fundamentally distinct from brain? It depends what you are looking for. If you want a knock-down argument against materialism and materialist accounts of mind, this won't do it. But if you are looking for consilience, in which multiple lines of independent evidence converge on

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the same target, then Schwartz's argument is a good one to have in your arsenal, for it fits nicely with biological arguments for intelligent design (cf. Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*), recent philosophical work on mental causation (cf. Robert Koons' *Realism Regained*), cosmological fine-tuning (cf. John Barrow and Frank Tipler's *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*), and consciousness studies (cf. Dean Radin's *The Conscious Universe*).

No one argues that the mind is entirely unconditioned by the brain (psychotropic drugs make this abundantly clear). The issue is whether the brain determines the mind without remainder. For conceptual acts like Schwartz's "mindful attention" to permanently alter patterns of brain activity that otherwise would remain stuck is therefore exactly what one would expect if the mind transcends the brain and yet is capable of physical effects. To be sure, the materialist has counterarguments here. A popular one these days is to treat conscious will as an illusion—we think that we have acted deliberately toward some end, but in fact our brain acted on its own and then deceived us into thinking that we acted deliberately. There's even a recent book making just that claim in its title: *The Illusion of Conscious Will* by Harvard psychologist Daniel Wegner.

Schwartz effectively engages this literature, especially the experiments by Benjamin Libet, which usually get interpreted as supporting the materialist view that conscious will is an illusion. Schwartz shows how these experiments are in fact better interpreted as leaving room for conscious will—and, indeed, a thoroughly libertarian free will. In this respect, Schwartz's discussion of free will as "free won't" (namely, the idea that free will consists in the ability to rule out possibilities) is deeply illuminating. It calls to mind the Judeo-Christian idea that creation does not add to God but rather subtracts from God: in the act of creation God rules out those worlds that are not actualized. The idea of ruling out possibilities is also the essence of the mathematical theory of information, in which information increases and possibilities get ruled out.

THE MIND AND THE BRAIN is strongest where it reviews current neurological research, showing how it leaves the door open to a nonmaterialist interpretation of the mind. The book is somewhat weaker where it attempts to place that research and its nonmaterialist interpretation within a theoretical framework. One might suspect that Schwartz's Buddhism is the problem, but it isn't. "Mindful attention," which Schwartz draws from the Buddhist tradition, is a spiritual discipline right in line with the practice of detachment employed by the Church's desert fathers. Spiritual disciplines work. Schwartz simply shows that they work in the therapeutic context. Schwartz doesn't force his nonmaterialist interpretation of neuroscience into the mold of Buddhist philosophy (Buddhist doctrines like emptiness, nirvana, and reincarnation are absent).

Nevertheless, Schwartz's theoretical framework is incomplete. For instance, Schwartz looks to quantum mechanics to allow an opening for "mental force," as he calls it, to interact with the material world (and thus brains in particular). Schwartz makes a good case for quantum mechanics being compatible with such a nonmaterialist view of mind. But then he wants to argue that the problem of making quantum measurements requires consciousness for its resolution—which, if true, would certainly strengthen the case for his nonmaterialist interpretation of mind. Yet he falls short of demonstrating that consciousness is the key to resolving the quantum measurement problem. There are other plausible explanations of quantum measurement that do not invoke consciousness. Schwartz therefore needs to do more

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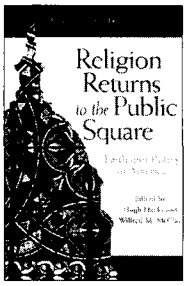

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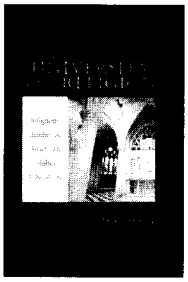

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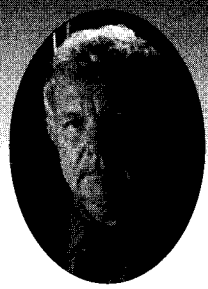
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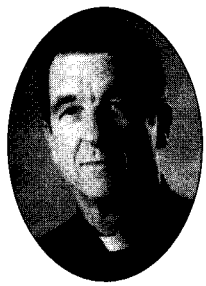
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than he does here to exclude such explanations.

When it comes to situating Schwartz's nonmaterialist view of mind within a theoretical framework, *The Mind and the Brain* is definitely a work in progress. Even so, I give Schwartz's project great hopes for ultimate success. In particular, I'm optimistic that Schwartz's concept of "mental force" can be given a solid metaphysical underpinning in terms of Rob Koons' above-mentioned work on mental causation. And a useful synergy between Schwartz's work in neuroscience and intelligent design's work in the life sciences is also highly promising.

A Merciless Mercy

A Merciful End: The Euthanasia Movement in Modern America. By Ian Dowbiggin. *Oxford University Press. 239 pp. $28.*

***Reviewed by* Wesley J. Smith**

Judging from its unfortunate title, *A Merciful End: The Euthanasia Movement in Modern America* would appear to be just another in the dreary collection of recent books extolling assisted suicide as a curative to the tyranny of modern medical paternalism and a necessary adjunct to the right of personal autonomy. But, as the old saying goes, one should not judge a book by its cover. Rather than being an apologia, University of Prince Edward Island history professor Ian Dowbiggin's approach is utterly fair and evenhanded. Instead of arguing the issue pro or con, he provides an exhaustively researched and objective history of euthanasia advocacy in the United States.

Dowbiggin demonstrates that euthanasia advocacy in America is not a recent phenomenon. The drive to legalize mercy killing actually began in the late nineteenth century, a natural byproduct of the popularization of eugenics. Indeed, Charles Darwin's warning in *The Descent of Man* that hospitals, asylums, and therapeutic medicine interfered with natural selection by permitting weak members of society to survive and reproduce—which would imply euthanasia as a curative—helped lead his cousin, Francis Galton, to the idea that society could improve the

Wesley J. Smith *is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute and an attorney for the International Task Force on Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia. He is the author of* Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America.

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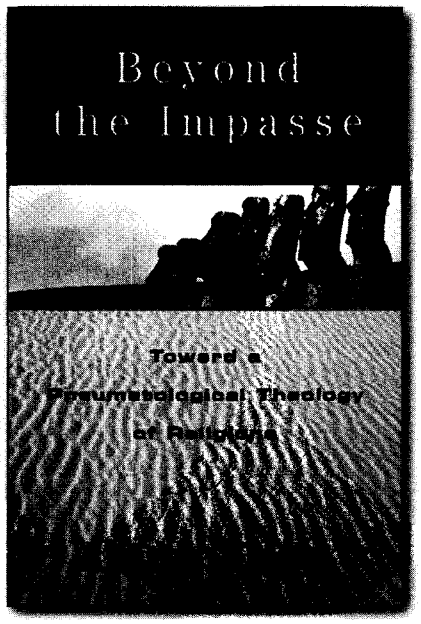

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gene pool by controlling human procreation. This was to be accomplished both by encouraging "good stock" to reproduce in larger numbers and to prevent "bad stock" from procreating at all.

It didn't take long for these attitudes to spread beyond deciding who should not be born to the presumption that society could decide who among the living should die. For many believers in eugenics, killing was not just seen as a rational means of ending suffering when life was no longer worth living because of pain or despair, but also had the potential to be an effective method of social control. Thus, in 1900, one of the euthanasia movement's pioneers, physician William Duncan McKim, advocated a "gentle, painless death" as the solution to problems he saw caused by America's drunkards, criminals, and people with disabilities.

In the first half of the twentieth century eugenics and euthanasia were symbiotically connected. Many among the American elite came to embrace euthanasia as part of the same enterprise. Among these were utilitarian philosopher Robert G. Ingersoll, biologist and early eugenics heavyweight Charles Davenport, Food and Drug Administrator Harvey Wiley, Margaret Sanger, Helen Keller, and civil rights lawyer Clarence Darrow, who advocated in 1915 that it was just to "chloroform unfit children . . . [and] show them the same mercy that is shown beasts that are no longer fit to live."

From the 1920s through the late 1930s, euthanasia continued to grow in public popularity. Indeed, as World War II loomed, public opinion polls showed popular support for legalization, and the leaders of the now fifty-year-old movement enthusiastically—and not unrealistically—predicted imminent legislative success. But the time, it turned out, was not ripe at all. The public's revulsion to the euthanasia pogrom against disabled infants and adults by doctors in Nazi Germany soon forced American euthanasia advocacy into the shadows, where it remained for the better part of the next forty years.

DOWBIGGIN'S HISTORY provides a fascinating study in how little the movement and its tactics have actually changed over the years. Indeed, the book's narrative discloses a remarkably clear and consistent pattern, both in the strategy and substance of euthanasia advocacy, from its inception to today.

Then (and now), euthanasia advocates manipulated language in order to gain public acceptance of their agenda. Indeed, the first example of

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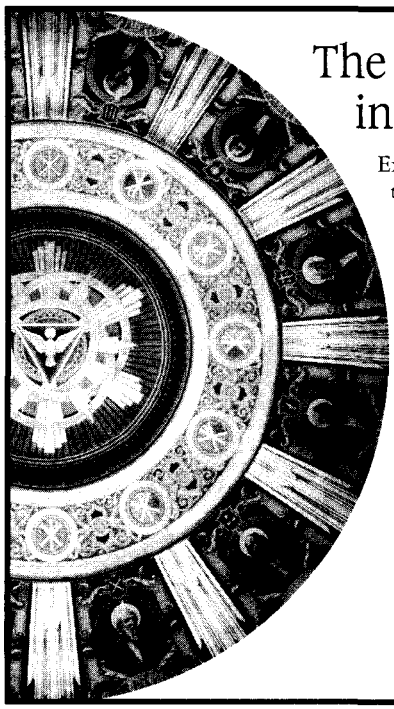

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this tactic was the movement's successful co-opting of the word "euthanasia" itself, which was originally understood as referring to the "relief of pain for the dying as the best way to ensure an 'easy death'"—a notion akin to the current understanding of the word "hospice." More recently, euthanasia has evolved into the euphemistic "death with dignity" and "aid in dying."

Then (and now), supporters of legalizing euthanasia thought of themselves as free thinkers with the courage and vision to break outdated religious "taboos" about the sanctity of human life for the sake of reforming society based on the truths of science and the values of secularism. Dowbiggin notes that the first activists viewed euthanasia as one part of a broader agenda of "kindred causes" that included eugenics, population control, and sexual equality—to which modern-day euthanasia enthusiasts would add abortion.

Then (and now), euthanasia advocates despised the Catholic Church and (to a lesser degree) evangelical Protestants for their alleged interference with individual freedom and the implementation of "enlightened" social policies. Then (and now), euthanasia advocacy was widespread among members of the Unitarian Church. Not surprisingly, some of the most enthusiastic supporters were (and are) secular humanists, whose "faith in man" rather than in God is deemed the ultimate creed. Indeed, according to Dowbiggin, Charles Francis Potter, the founder of the Humanist Society of New York, supported euthanasia as the "the quintessential Humanist cause," a position that many humanists still espouse.

Then (and now), the movement depended upon moral outlawry to move its agenda forward. Jack Kevorkian wasn't the first of these rogues and undoubtedly he won't be the last to thumb his nose at the law and social convention by defiantly carrying out mercy killings while daring society to stop him. In 1915, a physician named Harry Haiselden convinced the parents of a disabled infant not to have surgery performed that would have saved their child's life. Like Kevorkian and others of his ilk, Haiselden sought fame for his deed. And, like Kevorkian in our day, by his very defiance he "got more Americans than ever before talking about euthanasia" and "also won endorsements [for legalization] from prominent figures."

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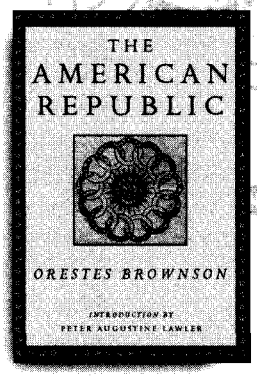

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FOR 162 PAGES, Dowbiggin's straightforward narrative traces the ins and outs, the ups and downs, of euthanasia advocacy: the creation of organizations, their changes of name to expand their popular appeal, the vagaries of public popularity, the impact of the Holocaust, the movement's infighting over tactics, the stridency and eccentricities of its leaders. It is all very interesting and informative. But then, for no reason that I can see, the author's narrative peters out as he approaches the present.

Despite the 1990s being the most dramatic and, unfortunately, successful decade in the history of American euthanasia advocacy, Dowbiggin devotes a mere fourteen pages to recent history. This makes it less likely that readers will pick up on the strong philosophical ties between the early movement and contemporary euthanasia advocacy. Consider the following recent developments, which receive far too little—or no—attention.

Oregon voters legalized assisted suicide for those diagnosed as terminally ill in 1992. While this is briefly discussed in the book, a fuller description of the events leading to the 1992 campaign is a tale well worth telling. Not only was the legalization campaign explicitly anti-Catholic, but a fuller account of why it was narrower than previously failed efforts to legalize euthanasia would have helped the reader understand that permitting doctors to write lethal prescriptions for terminally ill patients is seen by advocates as merely the proverbial foot in the door that will open society to a much broader mercy-killing license.

Then, in 1997, in two conjoined opinions, the United States Supreme Court refused to issue an assisted suicide *Roe v. Wade* decision that would have legalized the act throughout the country. Yes, the Supreme Court cases are mentioned. But there is no meaningful exploration of the theories advocated by euthanasia advocates that proved sufficiently persuasive in lower courts, requiring the Supreme Court to take up the issue. This failure allows important facts to go undisclosed. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, for example, would have imposed a broad euthanasia license through judicial fiat. Had Dowbiggin analyzed this radical decision, readers would have learned that it would have expanded the putative right to assisted suicide far beyond the terminally ill, to the disabled, the elderly, and even to those worried about being a financial burden on their families. Moreover, had the

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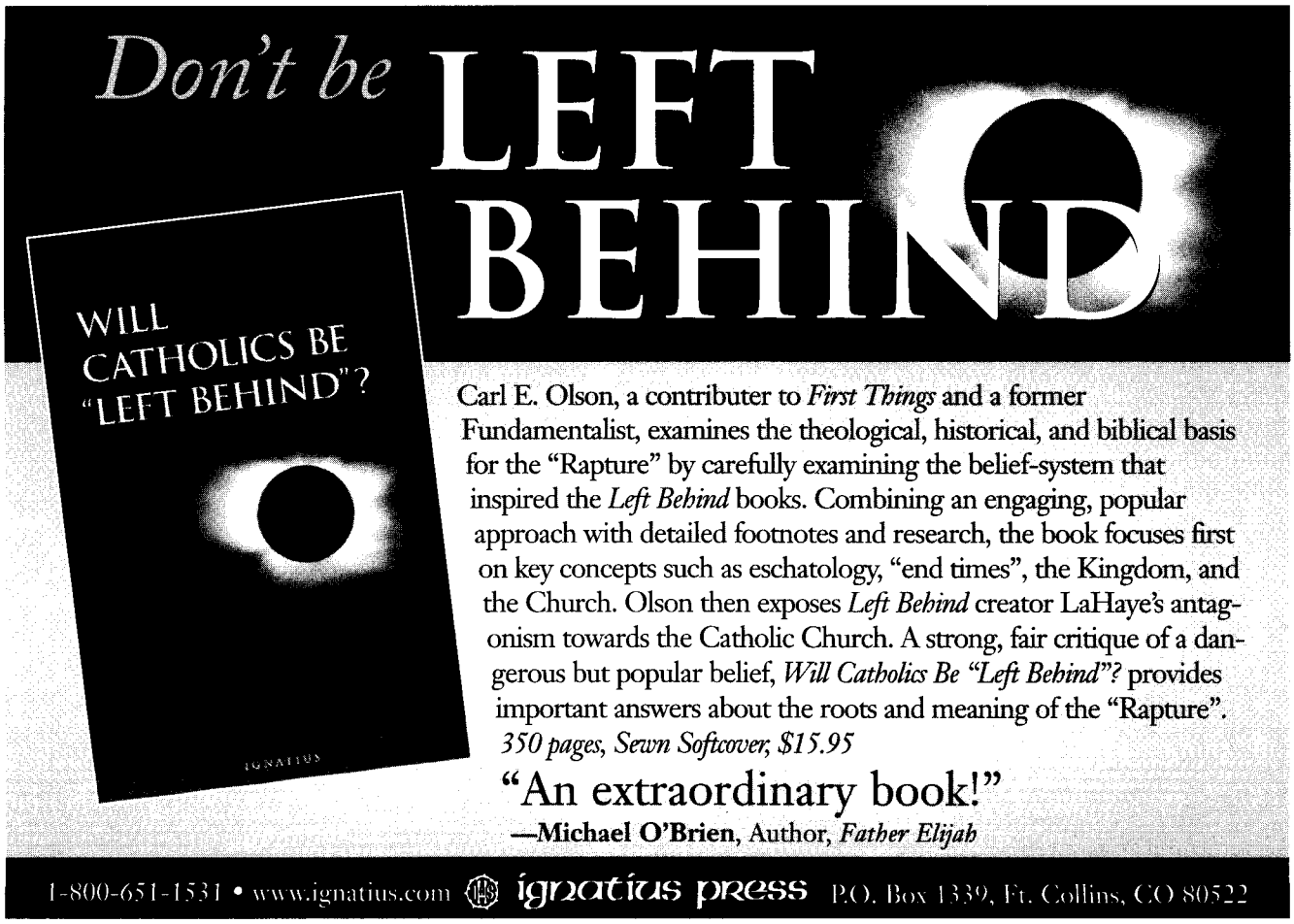
Ninth Circuit's decision gone into effect, doctors would not only have been granted a constitutional right to kill patients who asked to die, but to kill at the request of family members when patients were incapable of making their own decisions.

And lastly, despite being the most successful advocacy effort in the history of the euthanasia movement, Jack Kevorkian's eight-year crime spree is all but overlooked. Between 1990 and 1998, Kevorkian assisted the suicides of more than 130 people, was acquitted by several juries despite admitting his participation in several assisted suicide deaths, and, in an ultimate act of crass utilitarianism, harvested the kidneys of one of his victims for use in organ transplantation. Most of Kevorkian's victims were not terminally ill. Indeed, based upon their autopsies, five weren't even sick. Moreover, Kevorkian's amoral mindset—going so far as to advocate conducting medical experiments upon people being euthanized—is strikingly similar to the thinking of the originators of the euthanasia movement. Considering the attention and detail paid to far more obscure and less consequential euthanasia advocates, Dowbiggin's short shrift of the Kevorkian debacle is inexplicable.

Despite his scanting of recent developments, Dowbiggin has performed a valuable public service by writing *A Merciful End*. He concludes his history on a sobering and chilling note:

> Talk of a right to die raises troubling questions: once legalized for the dying, who can be denied such a right? The chronically ill, but not the dying? Pain-free patients who nonetheless feel their medical conditions leave them with no quality of life? Depressed teenagers? The mentally ill? Handicapped children whose parents wish them to be dead? Infants with severe disabilities? Where does the freedom to die end and the duty to die begin? The history of euthanasia in America reminds us that despite a century of intensive debate and passionate political battles, these questions remain largely unanswered.

There is a reason. If these questions were ever answered candidly, it would soon become clear to all that the modern movement, like a looping audio tape, would soon take us right back to where it all began—the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quicksand of eugenics. Should society come to that realization, it would soon mark the end of euthanasia as a respectable social movement.

Faith, Fiction, Flotsam

The Life of Pi. By Yann Martel. *Harcourt. 319 pp. $25.*

***Reviewed by* Randy Boyagoda**

Good news came from across the Atlantic late last year. England's most prestigious literary award—the Booker Prize—had been awarded to a work that made the following assertion on its inside cover: "This is a novel of such rare and wondrous storytelling that it may, as one character claims, make you believe in God. Can a reader reasonably ask for anything more?" That sophisticated English literary palettes thought this a reasonable claim—and that Canadian Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* has since become a bestseller—may be an indication that growing numbers of people, thirsting for more substance in their lives, are beginning to seek more substance in their reading. Or, alternately, it may be a comment on the brand of popular piety Martel's novel proposes.

The protagonist of *The Life of Pi* is the precocious son of a pragmatic zookeeper, an Indian boy fascinated by his nation's many faiths but forced by its many political problems to emigrate to Canada along with his family and their animal charges. During the voyage, their ship suddenly sinks, leaving the boy on a lifeboat along with a few furry survivors; ultimately only Pi and a tiger remain. As the duo drift through the Pacific Ocean, struggling to survive the elements, Pi must also struggle to survive his shipmate; he relies on his wits and his faith in, intermittently, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam to do so. After a series of adventures—some wondrous, some gruesome—their boat washes up in Mexico and the two part ways. We never hear from the tiger again, but we do hear from Pi. In fact, he retells his story as an adult living in Toronto, in a house whose décor—a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe rests beside a photo of Kaaba; a brass statue of Shiva stands beneath paintings of Christ; a prayer rug lies near a bedside Bible—inadvertently displays our protagonist's eclectically tacky approach to religion.

The Life of Pi seems to have as many literary predecessors as India has religions. There are traces of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, St. Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, and Aesop's *Fables*. But *The Life of Pi* also asks to be the latest in the long line of grand tales about India, novels that seek to capture what Martel himself calls "the rich, noisy, functioning madness" of the place, and a great deal of the novel's flaws rest in that ambition. The encounters of two more famous orphans with India's religions provide a sense of what Pi lacks. Kipling's Kim and Rushdie's Saleem Sinai dash from one end of India to another, experiencing the nation's religious panoply as it must be—as frenzied, vital, occasionally terrifying—rather than as a well-meaning Canadian might imagine it: as polite, passive, frequently meek.

For example, the adult Pi, an Indian orphan-cum-Canadian immigrant, recalls finding a Gideon Bible in a hotel room. He praises the Gideons, then advises: "They should leave not only Bibles, but other sacred writings as well. I cannot think of a better way to spread the faith. No thundering from a pulpit, no condemnation from bad churches, no peer pressure, just a book of scrip-

Randy Boyagoda *is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Boston University.*

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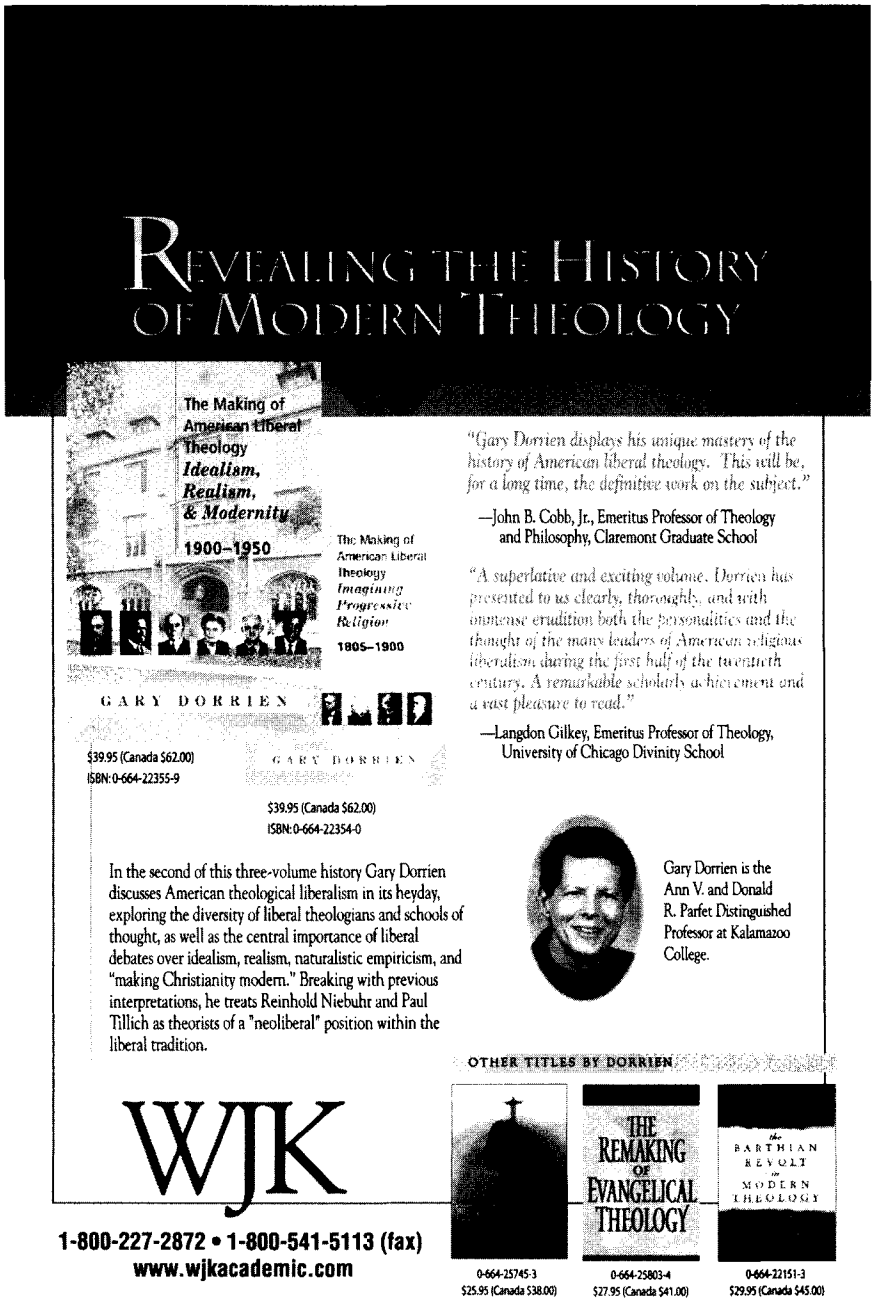
ture quietly waiting to say hello, as gentle and powerful as a girl's kiss on your cheek." The author's patent lack of appreciation for the intensity and particularity of religious devotion explains such myopic idealism and saccharine imagery. In telling us that the Bible (and "other sacred writings") is "just a book" to spread "the faith," Martel reveals his fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between God and religious practices. Martel offers a confusing pastiche of devotions brought into unity by the sincerity of individual intention and action, rather than by virtue of the singular truth inherent in any of the religions Pi purports to follow.

Pi's REPEATED all-inclusive paeans to his private trinity of faiths detract from an otherwise enjoyable tale, which Martel achieves when he forgets about religion and concentrates on telling his young hero's adventures. Running through the chaos of a sinking ship; watching a tiger wrestle a shark; exploring a mysterious island; devising ways to catch turtles and gather fresh water—these are but some of the novel's small pleasures. In matters not religious, Martel chose the right narrator: Pi's innocent voice allows us to revel in the wide-eyed pleasures of this world as only a young boy on a fantastic voyage can experience them. Consider Pi's description of the fearful symmetry of raw elegance and sublime power occasioned by his tiger companion returning to their boat:

> He surged onto the stern, quantities of water pouring off him, making my end of the boat pitch up. He balanced on the gunnel and the stern bench for a moment, assessing me. My heart grew faint. I did not think I would be able to blow into the whistle again. I looked at him blankly. He flowed down to the floor of the lifeboat and disappeared under the tarpaulin. I could see parts of him from the edges of the locker lid. I threw myself upon the tarpaulin, out of his sight—but directly above him. I felt an overwhelming urge to sprout wings and fly off.

Like Pi, we are breathless, a tiger-training whistle dangling from our lips, as much from the beauty as from the terror of a wild animal in close proximity.

HOWEVER GRATEFUL we may be to Martel for such moments, the third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and final section of his novel limits our general appreciation by enlisting us in a clumsy postmodern game of narration and belief. The section is comprised of a transcript between two Japanese representatives of the shipping company and Pi, recuperating in a Mexican hospital room. The Japanese have no time for Pi's unbelievable musings and insist upon a factual account of the ship's sinking, so Pi retells his tale, turning his animal shipmates into humans. The new version is more comprehensible but less enjoyable: either way we can never know which version "actually" happened. We likely entered the novel as skeptical as are the Japanese, but having heard the story, we now face a test of faith: Which do we believe? Of course Martel wants us to believe in Pi's original version, with the floating banana island and the man-eating plants and the flying fish. In his view, to do so is a leap of faith, which in turn is a leap towards God: the God brought into existence by the novel itself, a strange mishmash of religious notions and figures that together comprise the deity that Pi creates and celebrates. In short, a God of fiction.

Martel should have stuck to the metaphoric approach he takes to religion at the end of the novel's second section, when Pi finally reaches land. In his darkest moment, Pi perceives: "The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar. It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God." The next chapter opens: "When we reached land," a phrase that with simple perfection conveys the foundation given to us when we rely on God's power, rather than on our own. In one of the novel's few instances of coherent religious meaning, Martel echoes St. Paul and Kempis' *Imitatio* in telling us that if we turn to God in our lowest moments, inevitably we will be raised up on high. A meaningful moment, sadly set adrift amongst so much faith-as-flotsam. If only we could agree with Pi's approach to religion, we could enjoy his *Life*. Were we to read in a compartmentalized way, taking bits and pieces from here and there that amuse or ennoble us, ignoring the deeper implications of such a piecemeal commitment to a unified whole, we could happily sail along with boy and tiger. But such a way of reading, of professing, indeed of living, while so symptomatic of our contemporary condition, ought not be our course.

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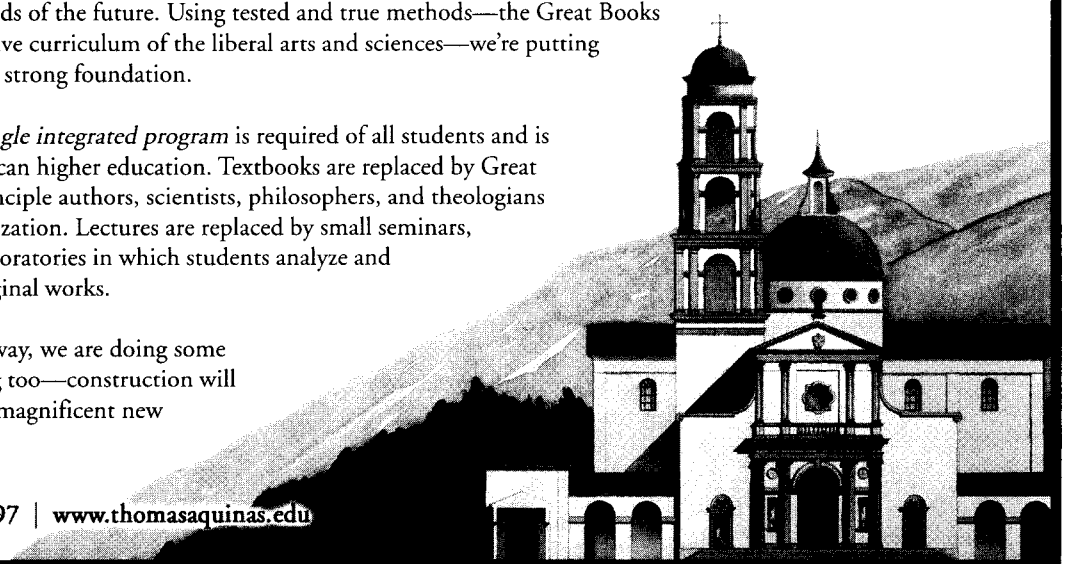

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T. S. Eliot made the following distinction: "We must believe that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order which are not ours." Martel falls into the latter camp: unfortunately, his invitation to believe in God through his novel is too individualized to be reasonable. We do not turn to fiction to find the true God, and we should not turn to it to find a recipe for making a God agreeable enough to our personal tastes to believe in. We turn to good novels in part to exercise our imaginations, and *The Life of Pi* allows for that in some places. Yet Martel goes much further, to imply that we can find God by using our imaginations freely. But we can only hope to find God by using our imaginations wisely. Fiction, on its own, cannot create truth. The finest books can at best sound the depths of the human condition and bring rumors of the highest truths. They help chart our course towards that undiscovered country where we all hope, someday, to land.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP: A CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION. By LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON and WILLIAM S. KURZ, S.J. *Eerdmans. 299 pp. $24 paper.*

The conversation is between two biblical scholars over the modern historical approach to the Bible and its consequences for the Catholic Church's use of the Scriptures. Johnson is more alert to the downside than Kurz, and much readier to propose a reappropriation of the classical Christian way of reading the Bible. His challenge: "If Scripture is ever again to be a living source for theology, those who practice theology must become less preoccupied with the world that produced the Scripture and learn again to live in the world that Scripture produces." The book begins with a brief, informed, and balanced assessment of the accomplishments and limitations of Catholic biblical scholarship in the last two generations.

— *Robert Louis Wilken*

SAMUEL PEPYS: THE UNEQUALED SELF. By CLAIRE TOMALIN. *Knopf. 470 pp. $30.*

This justly acclaimed biography of Pepys, famous for his ten years of diary-writing beginning in 1660 and dealing with matters both intimate and public, conveys a powerful sense of the author's knowing the man personally. Rising from his origins as a poor tailor's son to being a counselor to kings and virtual master of the royal navy, Pepys was close to the action through turbulent times of regicide, commonwealth, and restoration, ending up by honorably maintaining his loyalty to the exiled James II. At times, Tomalin overreaches in presuming personal familiarity with her subject, and does so most annoyingly with her repeated claim, unsupported by evidence, that Pepys' regular churchgoing and many references to personal prayer are empty conventions. She tells us, for instance, that "he invokes God's name as nonbelievers and half-believers do, a figure of speech alone." It is as though she is trying to sanitize her subject, assuring her readers that Pepys was a thoroughly secular chap, just like us. To her credit, Tomalin does not overplay the salacious aspects of the diary, which, in fact, are quite tame by today's nonstandards. Although of interest to the general reader, this comprehensive, albeit not exhaustive, account of the life will be appreciated most by those who have some familiarity with the diary, which is surely one of the more remarkable documents in English literature.

THE BEST OF *TRIUMPH*. Edited by E. MICHAEL LAWRENCE. *Christendom. 670 pp. $39.95.*

In 1966, L. Brent Bozell launched a different kind of Catholic magazine. *Triumph* was conservative and didn't mind being called right wing, but presented itself as being Catholic without qualification. At the opening of its run of almost ten years, Bozell left no doubt that *Triumph* would represent a conservatism very different from that of *National Review*, edited by his brother-in-law, William F. Buckley, Jr. Buckley's conservatism, Bozell asserted, was thoroughly modern, being but the flip side of modern lib-

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eralism. *Triumph*'s conservatism would be Catholic, and radically so. Most of the pieces included in this large collection are editorials or items written by the editors. There are also vigorous essays by noted Catholic thinkers who moved occasionally into the *Triumph* orbit: Dietrich von Hildebrand, John Lukacs, Germain Grisez, Francis Canavan, Lorenzo Albacete, and Jeffrey Hart. *Triumph* was frequently strident and over the top, but it could also be devastatingly witty, erudite in its eviscerations of liberal pretensions, and powerfully moving in its evocation of "The Catholic Thing"—a transcendent reality embedded in history and incapable of being taken captive by the partisanships of the City of Man. *Triumph* died of excessive eccentricity. Today there are many more publications on what might be called the Catholic right, but the erudition, the wit, and the fun of being radical are largely missing. *The Best of Triumph* is a useful resource for students of American religion and, more important, a testimony to fidelity's potential for producing the outrageous, which is sometimes redemptively outrageous.

Bishop von Galen: German Catholicism and National Socialism. By Beth A. Griech-Polelle. *Yale University Press. 259 pp. $35.*

Clemens August Graft von Galen was Bishop of Münster from 1933 until his death in 1946, and is generally honored as one of the too few Christian leaders in Germany who spoke out boldly against the Nazi regime. In this scholarly exercise in debunking, it is alleged that Galen did not do as much as he could, and the good that he did was done from mixed motives. He was a conservative, after all, and an aristocratic one to boot. The author uncritically credits the black legend of Pius XII's "silence" regarding the Holocaust, and apparently thinks that both the Pope and Galen should have urged the German people to rise up in armed revolt against Hitler. Right. She does quote this fine passage from one of the three 1941 sermons in which Galen challenged the regime: "We are the anvil, not the hammer. The object which is forged on the anvil receives its shape not alone from the hammer but also from the anvil. Become hard! Remain firm! If it is sufficiently tough and firm and hard, the anvil usually lasts longer than the hammer." In a dark time, Bishop Galen was a light. Perhaps he could have done more. But for what he did he will be honored long after this book and so many of its genre are forgotten.

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THE PITY OF IT ALL: A HISTORY OF JEWS IN GERMANY, 1743-1933. By AMOS ELON. *Metropolitan. 446 pp. $30.*

The subtitle says it all. From Moses Mendelssohn's arrival in Berlin as a fourteen-year-old to the triumph of Hitler in 1933, the relatively small number of Jews in Germany (a little less than one percent) tended to be German to the core, thus magnifying the shock at the ascendancy of the Nazis. Elon tells the story in a straightforward and chronological manner. Among the uses of *The Pity of It All*, along with the work of Fritz Stern, Victor Klemperer, and others, is that it gives the lie to the fevered imaginings of Daniel Goldhagen and his ilk that German-Jewish relations were marked by relentless hostility and suspicion, driven by a virulent "exterminationism" just waiting to be unleashed by Hitler.

THE TIME IS NEAR

THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATION IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY

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James Hitchcock
Professor of History, St. Louis University

S. M. Hutchens
Senior Editor, Touchstone

Alan Jacobs
Professor of English, Wheaton College

E. Michael Jones
Editor, Culture Wars

Leon J. Podles
Author of The Church Impotent

Patrick Henry Reardon
Pastor of All Saints Orthodox Church, Chicago

OURS IS AN ANXIOUS TIME, with talk of clashes of civilizations and orthodoxies, dirty bombs and killer viruses, coming economic depressions, and violent movements all around the world dedicated to destroying modern societies. Even sober scholars write books on the end of Western civilization. Apocalyptic books are selling tens of millions of copies, and apocalyptic movements are growing in all the churches.

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GETTING IT RIGHT. By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR. *Regnery. 311 pp. $24.95.*

A documentary in the form of a novel that provides an insider's account of the early years of the conservative movement launched by *National Review*. Center stage is given to Ayn Rand and her cause of "Objectivism," along with the John Birch Society, with supporting roles for other anti-Communists who went over the edge into conspiratorial nuttiness. Mr. Buckley and his magazine were the ideological border patrol determining what would and would not gain admission to an intellectual and political movement that, from Barry Goldwater through George W. Bush, has reshaped American history. A fascinating and informative read.

BLESSED ONE: PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVES ON MARY. Edited by BEVERLY ROBERTS GAVENTA. *Westminster/John Knox. 158 pp. $19.95 paper.*

Kathleen Norris notes in the foreword that powerful anti-Catholic currents make Protestants embarrassed and reticent about Mary. They bring her out for the Christmas pageant and then pack her away for another year. Most of the eleven essays here aim at remedying that spiritual and theological misfortune. Some of them are predictable feminist and "womanist" exercises on liberationist themes, but Joel Green on Mary as "curious exemplar" and Katharine Doob Sakenfeld on her Old Testament analogues are solid contribu-

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tions. Particularly noteworthy is Cynthia L. Rigby on "Mary and the Artistry of God," an engaging reflection on whether Mary might have said no to Gabriel's announcement and what her saying yes means for human freedom.

The First Five Years of the Priesthood. By Dean R. Hoge. *Liturgical Press. 186 pp. $19.95 paper.*

The results of a 2000 national survey of priests recently ordained. While the long-term decline in the number of ordinations has slowed, Hoge says it has not been definitively reversed and notes that the replacement rate is only 35 percent for the number of priests dying, retiring, or resigning. There have been, he reports, few dramatic changes in the last twenty years, although younger priests tend to be more satisfied and less rebellious toward what he calls "authoritative institutional Church structures." Maybe, he says, because they are in tune with the Church's leadership, maybe because they see little chance of changing much of anything, or "maybe a different type of man is entering the priesthood." Hoge acknowledges that most of the priests involved in the research are from "the liberal wing of the priesthood." He suggests that the increased attention paid to homosexuality in the priesthood is simply reflective of changes in the surrounding culture.

The Vatican's Women. By Paul Hofmann. *St. Martin's. 208 pp. $23.95.*

The former Rome bureau chief for the *New York Times* reports on the women, not all of them religious sisters, who, while not holding the top positions, pull many of the important strings in the Curia. Their stories will be no surprise to most readers, apart from ideologues who are convinced that the Catholic Church is an entrenched andocracy, but they do illuminate aspects of the day-by-day life of the Holy See not generally known.

Horror: A Biography. By E. Michael Jones. *Spence. 298 pp. $17.95 paper.*

Taking off from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the author ranges through history, gathering support for his thesis that the project of "the Enlightenment" enlists nihilism, sex, and horror in a monstrous drama that turns upon its human creators. Film buffs will be intrigued by his analysis of movies such as *Alien*, but the overall argument is, while sometimes suggestive, overheated.

Joseph Smith. By Robert V. Remini. *Viking. 185 pp. $19.95.*

A lively addition to the "Penguin Lives" series offering a once-over-lightly introduction to the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The story is heavy on the political, economic, and cultural context of Joseph Smith's labors and does not attempt to adjudicate questions of truth or falsehood.

Islam Unveiled. By Robert Spencer. *Encounter. 170 pp. $24.95.*

"Islam is a religion of peace." That's the tune we whistle as we pass ground zero in lower Manhattan. Spencer says we should stop kidding ourselves. His subtitle is "Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest Growing Faith," and Spencer is much more than disturbed. He's wrong of course about Islam being the world's fastest growing faith—Christianity is that—but he's right about the unevadable questions. He also recognizes that the questions finally must be answered by Muslims who are believably Islamic.

Present Dangers: Rediscovering the First Amendment. By David Lowenthal. *Spence. 332 pp. $17.95.*

First published in 1997, and now with a post-September 11 preface by the author and a foreword by Harvey Mansfield, this is a vigorous defense of the original understanding of the First Amendment that demonstrates the Founders' genius in synthesizing rights-based liberalism and republican responsibility. The argument never grows old.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The Sounds of Religion in a Time of War

I write the day after military action was launched. What happens in the days and weeks ahead nobody knows, and any speculation would be dated by the time you read this. So there is no point in that. What can be known now, and is very much worth trying to understand, is how the several religious communities have attempted to influence the decisions leading up to war. The following is an annotated summary of positions, arguments, admonitions, and agitations that reflect the ways in which religious leadership tried—for better and worse—to bring moral judgment to bear in a time of war.

"How does it feel to be all alone, or almost all alone?" The reporter's question suggested that I was the only person in a Roman collar defending American policy in the media. He was not quite right about that, but it is true that there weren't many of us. And I did not think of myself as defending American policy so much as trying to contribute a measure of moral clarity in a time of great confusion. Of course, I readily admit that those who disagree thought they were the ones providing moral clarity. Perhaps the best way to begin is to offer a précis of the arguments I've been making, with special reference to Catholic positions, and then come back to some alternative accounts of moral duty in a time of war. We will want to attend also to the sounds of oldline and evangelical Protestants, as well as Jews, in the public square.

Up until the first rocket hit Baghdad, the Pope was urging us to pray that Iraq would be disarmed without resort to military force. For months he tirelessly repeated that war is always a defeat for humanity, a failure to maintain the peace of right order. St. Augustine called the peace of right order *tranquillitas ordinis*. In addition, the Pope urgently reminded us that in history nothing is inevitable, and that with God all things are possible. In every statement I have made, I have underscored my unqualified agreement with that message of the Holy Father.

That message is entirely consistent with the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and others in the just war tradition that, in the absence of *tranquillitas ordinis*, war may sometimes be a moral duty in order to overturn injustice and protect the innocent. The cause must be just, and the just cause in this case is the disarmament of Iraq. That just cause was explicitly and consistently affirmed by the Pope, also in his messages to both Saddam Hussein and President Bush. And it was affirmed by multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council.

The question was whether that just cause could be vindicated without resort to military force. France—despite having voted for the unanimously approved Resolution 1441 that presumably gave Saddam one last chance to disarm—was in the lead of those contending that it would be wiser to wait and see what Iraq might do over a period of months or even years, during which time it could be safely contained without war. How best to vindicate the just cause, I insisted, is a matter of practical wisdom, of what is called prudential judgment. In just war doctrine, the Church's competence and responsibility is to set forth the pertinent moral principles. As No. 2309 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear, the application of those principles to specific cases is the responsibility of political leaders. It is true that religious leaders can claim that the principles are being ignored or misapplied, but in the latter case they do so at the considerable risk of exceeding their competence and undermining their credibility. The questions raised to religious spokesmen are

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inescapable: On the basis of what expert knowledge do you advocate policy *x* against policy *y*? By what authority or by whose authority do you speak?

Criminal Negligence

It was pointed out that for twelve years Saddam Hussein had successfully defied the Security Council, beginning with his refusal to disarm as required by the terms that ended the first Gulf War. He had been responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands (some authorities say over a million) people in aggressive war, and had used weapons of mass destruction to slaughter thousands of his own people. He possessed and was bent upon further developing more horrible weapons; he had publicly stated his support for the attack of September 11, and was in contact and declared sympathy with terrorists devoted to multiplying such attacks. None of these facts were in dispute.

In the judgment of the U.S. and many other governments, Saddam posed a grave and imminent threat to America, to world peace, and to the lives of innumerable innocents. If that judgment is correct, I argued, the use of military force to remove that threat is, in the absence of plausible alternatives, both justified and necessary. Then I always added this: heads of government who are convinced of the correctness of that judgment would be criminally negligent and in violation of their solemn oath to protect their people if they did not act to remove such a threat.

I emphasized that, as a theologian and moralist, I had no special competence to assess the threat posed by Iraq. On the basis of available evidence and my considered confidence in those responsible for making the relevant decisions, I was inclined to believe and I earnestly prayed that they would do the right thing. I was impressed by the degree to which opposing contentions turned on this question of confidence, or, rather, widespread lack of confidence in—indeed contempt for—George W. Bush. In the slogans of street demonstrators, but also in statements by churchmen, the opposition positions advanced frequently came down to little more than defamation of presidential character. It was not an edifying spectacle.

Discussions and debates sometimes turned on the meaning of preventive or preemptive war. Those terms were also used by the Administration, and I argued that they should not be. Some even spoke approvingly of "wars of choice." War, if it is just, is not an option chosen but a duty imposed. Just war is in response to aggression. Iraq's aggression was first against Kuwait, then in defiance of the terms of surrender, then in support of, if not direct participation in, acts of terrorism. Joined to that was the brutal aggression against its own citizens, and the possession of weapons of mass destruction which it could use or permit others to use for further aggression. Q: But how could we know what Saddam would do? A: We couldn't know for sure. Q: Wouldn't it be better to wait and see? A: To wait until he did what it was reasonable to believe he had the means and intention of doing would be to wait too long. Leaders guilty of such negligence would rightly be held morally accountable.

And so the arguments went back and forth. As it happens, there is in the Catholic tradition a considerable literature on prudential moral action in the face of aggressive threats and great injustice. Augustine, Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, and Francisco Suarez, for example, all addressed these questions. The almost total absence of reference to such recognized authorities in statements by Catholics, including bishops and curial officials in Rome, was impressive. Of course there are novel elements in any historical circumstance, but it is particularly unseemly for Catholics to talk like neophiliacs, so enamored of the new that they forget the centuries of reflection that is the Catholic moral tradition.

The Locus of Moral Authority

A curiously prominent novelty in the discussion was the claim that the United Nations is the exclusive locus of moral authority in international affairs. As it happens, since 1945 only two wars—the Korean and the 1991 Gulf War—have been endorsed by the Security Council. And the Korean War was approved only by the happenstance that the Soviet Union was on one of its "walkouts" and therefore could not exercise its veto. Depending on the definition of what constitutes a war, there have been between 100 to 180 wars in the world since 1945. As it also happens, Resolution 1441, unanimously approved in November, demanded that Iraq disarm immediately or face the consequences. Nobody claimed that Iraq had complied, and proposals for "extended timelines" and the like appeared to invite no more than continuing defiance of the past twelve years. I agreed with those who said that no further UN "authorization" was required, if it was morally required in the first place.

The day after military action began, the evening news headlined, "Vatican condemns both sides for war." Spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the Pope received news of the war with "deep pain." The official statement explained: "On the one hand, it is to be regretted that the Iraqi government did not accept the resolutions of the United Nations and the appeal of

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the Pope himself, as both asked that the country disarm. On the other hand, it is to be deplored that the path of negotiations, according to international law, for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi drama has been interrupted." On the one hand, on the other hand. What Saddam did was regretted; what Bush did was deplored. Some pounced on this as an instance of precisely that false evenhandedness of "moral equivalence" that John Paul so sharply opposed during the Cold War. Others deplored that in none of the statements issuing from the Holy See was there any reference to the totalitarian oppression and massive violation of human rights by the Saddam regime. The suggestion seemed to be that there were two heads of state, Saddam and Bush, who disagreed about how to implement UN resolutions, and the latter was guilty of abandoning the search for a peaceful solution by resorting to war. Moreover, there was no mention of the fact that in the 1991 Gulf War the U.S. had the backing of the Security Council and therefore had presumably satisfied the requirements of "international law," and yet in 1991 the Pope condemned military action against Iraq in what George Weigel, author of the monumental biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope,* calls "apocalyptic" terms.

It is not easy to counter the complaint of those who say that the Holy See seriously confused the question of moral legitimacy in international affairs, sometimes leaving the impression that questions of war and peace, right and wrong, come down to how the Pope feels about things. I do not accept that complaint, but it is most particularly puzzling that, with respect to moral credibilty and authority, some in the Curia seem bent upon hitching the wagon of the Catholic Church to the dubiously constructed institution that is the UN. The life and mission of the Catholic Church will continue long after the UN is a historical footnote along with, say, the Congress of Vienna. The experience of the last quarter century seems to have been forgotten by some. When, for instance, the Pope was playing a crucial role in bringing about the end of the evil empire of the Soviet Union, the UN was more than simply useless. Why now is it the bearer of moral authority in international authorities? If indeed that is, as some contend, the position of the Catholic Church.

Pacem in Terris

The claim that the UN is the exclusive locus of legitimate authority in international affairs was over the past three months frequently asserted by leading churchmen, but it was not argued, and certainly it was not argued in terms of Catholic doctrine regarding legitimate authority. The week before the military action began, I was invited to give a lecture at the UN to the Pacem in Terris Society. The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was issued by Pope John XXIII forty years ago this Holy Week. In working through it again, I was impressed by how judicious it is in its discussion of the UN, affirming it chiefly as a defender of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nowhere in the encyclical, or in John Paul II's discussion of it in his world peace message this January, is there a suggestion that the UN has supplanted the nation-state. In fact, to the consternation of many world government proponents of the past and present, the UN is constituted on the premise of national sovereignty. Further, the Security Council—with its permanent members possessing the right to veto—very deliberately reflects the realities of politics among great powers. (At least what were thought to be the realities back in 1945 when it was envisioned that France might again be a great power.) The U.S. and others who wrote the UN Charter understood the Charter. Can anyone imagine a President of the United States declaring that, as a matter of principle, any use of American military power is subject to the veto of Russia, China, and France? Any President who said so would soon be out of office. Yet in the recent debate, that was precisely the interpretation of the Charter espoused by many, including prominent Catholic leaders.

The UN officials and leaders of nongovernmental organizations at the Pacem in Terris meeting were keenly aware that these were probably the most critical days for the UN since its founding. Some of them had over the years worked closely with the Holy See in countering UN policies with respect to abortion, family policy, population, and related questions. They were deeply troubled, as was I, by prelates associated with the Holy See now bent on so inflating the moral authority of the UN. It was strange to hear bishops seeming to suggest that the UN had also supplanted the Holy See, claiming for it a moral authority that many had previously associated with the Catholic Church.

And all present at the lecture were grimly aware of the possibility that the UN will go the way of the League of Nations if it is not prepared to support the enforcement of its own resolutions. That would seem to be the almost inevitable consequence if the UN persists in rejecting support such as that of the coalition led by the U.S. in Iraq. Contra the proponents of a world government, the UN is constituted by a recognition that there is a necessary connection between power and moral responsibility. Nations do and should act in their own interests, in the hope that interests can be coordinated to serve the common good. The UN has sometimes been useful

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toward that end, and many would understandably regret its self-inflicted diminishment or demise.

For the first time since the founding of the UN, opinion makers in the mainstream of American political discourse are advocating a formal or de facto withdrawal from the organization by the U.S. It is said by others that, if there were no UN, we would have to invent it, and there is something to that. I expect the UN will be significantly modified, but not before its present apparat puts up a vigorous fight to make it what it never was and was never meant to be. Or it will be replaced by new institutions more attuned to the nexus of power and responsibility and aimed at coordinating national interests in the service of peace, never forgetting that peace as *tranquillitas ordinis* will always be sadly deficient short of Our Lord's return in glory.

Elevating the Public Discourse

In the debate leading up to military action, there was much understandable talk about the terrible consequences of war. The question of consequences bears strongly, of course, on the just war criterion of proportionality. One was struck by the ways in which the Bush Administration addressed the Iraq crisis with explicit reference to just war doctrine, including proportionality. Protests in Europe—more precisely, in what is now called Old Europe—frequently alluded to American inexperience and "cowboy" impetuosity. Such statements would be insulting were they not so demeaning of those who make them, including prelates associated with the Holy See. As it is, we must exercise a measure of patience with societies that have run out of steam and resent the vibrancy of America. A cardinal tells me that I must understand that his brethren in the Curia reflect the dominant views of their own countries, which are usually of the Old Europe. No doubt, but the Church is supposed to be universal, as in "catholic."

On the putative dangers posed by American immaturity and inexperience, one might consult the history of, say, the last hundred years. I pointed out that the record of the U.S. in combating tyranny, defending freedom, providing humanitarian aid, motoring economic development, and securing a modicum of world order compares very favorably with the record of, for instance, Germany, France, Russia, or Italy. Yes, it was said in response, but you can't expect Europeans to be grateful forever for what the U.S. did in two World Wars and the Cold War. In effect: What have you done for us lately? After all, the end of the Cold War was more than a decade ago. This seemed odd coming from bishops. It used to be said that Rome thinks in terms of centuries.

Ranking ecclesiastics took up the time of U.S. decision makers, badgering them about whether they had thought of this possible consequence or that. What about Muslim reaction? What about civilian casualties? The simple answer is that such consequences are unknowable and therefore unknown, except to God. I know that possible consequences have been considered, day and night for many months, by competent parties. I know there is a determination to minimize damage to innocents, and a reasoned expectation that successful action will weaken Islamist enemies of civilization and strengthen the Muslim forces of decency and freedom. The U.S. plans for changing the politics and culture of the Middle East, including Palestinian-Israeli relations, are indeed ambitious. Nobody can know for sure what will happen, but religious leaders should bring more to the discussion than their fears. Nervous hand-wringing is not a moral argument.

I had said that we should, with the Holy Father, be on our knees in prayer that Iraq will disarm without military action. If war comes, I said, we must pray that a just cause prevails—swiftly, surely, with minimal damage to innocents and with a clear determination to help the Iraqi people then freed from a brutal tyranny. Nobody asked or expected that the Catholic Church bless military action as though it were a Christian crusade. After the war, the Church, and the Holy Father in particular, will be indispensable as an interlocutor in moving Islam away from the most ominously destructive possibilities of a "clash of civilizations." In sum, the position that some of us tried to advance during these weeks and months was this: Military action in order to disarm Iraq can be morally justified in terms of just war doctrine. Whether, in the retrospect of history, it will be viewed as a prudent course of action, nobody can know. If such action is undertaken, however, we have no moral alternative but to pray that a just cause will prevail justly.

And now war has come. By the time you read this, a great deal more will likely be known about consequences. At present, I'm afraid it must be said that the public witness of the Catholic Church, severely battered by the sex abuse scandals of the past year, has been further confused and weakened. Compared to, for instance, the leadership of oldline Protestantism, the Catholic bishops in the U.S. have been generally careful in their public statements, mainly confining themselves to raising questions. When military action commenced, Bishop Wilton Gregory of the U.S. episcopal conference issued a carefully crafted statement, noting that faithful Catholics and people of good will can disagree about the wisdom of the policy, and that the Church spiritually supports both those who conscientiously support and those who

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conscientiously oppose the war. The same carefulness did not characterize the statements by officials of the Holy See, some of whom have come unconscionably close to suggesting that Catholic Americans must choose between loyalty to their country and fidelity to the Church. If, as one curial archbishop has declared, the coalition led by the U.S. is engaged in a "crime against peace," it would seem to follow that our soldiers are engaged in a criminal activity.

As you might imagine, I have received many messages taking issue with what I have said. A surprising number attribute to the Pope things he has not said. Don't I know that the Pope has declared the war to be "illegal," "immoral," "in violation of the Church's teaching," and "a crime against humanity"? No, I don't, and I don't know that because he has never said what many are claiming he said. The "crime against humanity" line was cited even by the *Wall Street Journal*, which, to its credit, promptly retracted when the error was pointed out. There are times when Catholics, and all Christians, must choose between complicity in great injustice and fidelity to moral truth. That choice has over the centuries produced martyrs beyond numbering. For a curial official even to imply that coalition soldiers and others are facing such a choice is a reckless abuse of ecclesiastical office. Unless, of course, he really thinks that his view of the war is binding upon consciences. Were that the position of the Church, one would expect the Pope to say so, and the Pope has not said anything even remotely like that. It is to be feared that some churchmen are more enamored of being players in world politics than devoted to being shepherds of souls.

At the same time, and somewhat contradictorily, curial officials have said that they are not arguing moral theology but are making prudential judgments, drawing on "the Church's vast experience in international affairs." People may be forgiven if, faced with the choice between the geopolitical expertise of the Curia and that of the people surrounding George W. Bush and Tony Blair, they choose the latter. A crucial question is this: In the past three months, has the Holy See elevated the level of moral discourse or added to the discussion considerations that would otherwise have been neglected? It is not easy to answer that question in the affirmative.

His most devoted admirers acknowledge that the Pope bears a measure of responsibility for this unhappy circumstance. And it is a mildly amusing nuisance to hear chronic dissenters from firm magisterial teaching on faith and morals proclaim that, on war and peace, they are loyal to the Pope, while the champions of magisterial teaching are, in fact, dissenters. Well, let them have their little fun while they can. With respect to providing moral clarity about war and peace, it must candidly be admitted that this has not been this pontificate's finest hour. But nobody should be shaken too severely. Flannery O'Connor said that we sometimes suffer more from the Church than for the Church. And it is really not suffering so much as it is a matter of disappointment, and more than a little embarrassment.

The Religious Influence

Within hours of the military action, the Pew Research Center did a national survey to find out how statements by religious leaders affect views of the war. It turned out that "only ten percent" said statements of religious leaders were more determinative than—in order of influence—the opinions of family and friends, political commentators, elected leaders, and entertainment celebrities. (In terms of influence, celebrities were a distant last.) I'm surprised that the determinative influence of religious leaders was as high as ten percent. Apart from pacifists who are opposed in principle to all military actions, thoughtful people take their cues on such matters from those who they assume are most knowledgeable, which usually does not include priests, pastors, and rabbis. According to one news story on the survey, it showed that Catholic priests were "overwhelmingly" opposed to the war. This is based on the finding that 14 percent of Mass-goers said their priest spoke against the war and none said their priest spoke in favor of the war. Again, given the widespread pacifism among Catholic clergy, I am surprised that the number outspokenly opposed is so low. And what would it mean to preach what the reporter calls a "pro-war" homily? I doubt if any priest unfurled a flag in the pulpit and called for death to the infidels. And a good thing, too. Whoever paid for the Pew survey should ask for their money back.

Not, of course, that many religious leaders did not do their utmost to influence public opinion. There is, for instance, the moribund National Council of Churches (NCC), which is not much heard from in recent years, except when it gets an influx of outside funding to tout a favored issue. The NCC has been reduced to hiring itself out as a rent-a-blessing agency for leftist causes. The last time it got some national attention was its 2000 campaign to return little Élian Gonzalez to the dictatorship of Fidel Castro. The Rev. Robert Edgar, a former Democratic Congressman, is the general secretary of the NCC, and a while back he led a group that took out a full page ad in the *New York Times* and other papers (costing well over $100,000) addressed to President Bush: "Jesus Changed Your Heart. Now Let Him Change Your Mind." The ad said,

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"You've proclaimed the crucial role of your faith in your life, and you've said that people of faith are often 'our nation's voice of conscience.' Listen to our voices now." I expect that Mr. Bush had different voices in mind.

After protesting America's "unprovoked" attack on "a nation which is not threatening the United States," and predicting that "it will bring death and destruction to Baghdad, a huge city filled with innocent civilians," Mr. Edgar and his colleagues declared: "It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack." After delivering themselves of Our Lord's opinion on U.S. policy, the leaders concluded by casting doubt on George W. Bush's faith: "If Jesus Christ truly 'changed your heart' as you have said, let him change your mind." In other words, the authenticity of your faith is being tested by whether you agree with us who agree with Jesus. Call it arrogance or call it blasphemy or call it just plain dumb, the leadership of the Protestant liberal oldline has once again reacted in a manner utterly predictable and utterly shameless. Edgar led a "peace delegation" that was well received in France, Germany, and Iraq. He and his fellow delegates have complained loudly and persistently that Bush refuses to meet with them. I expect the President has heard their message that he is a usurper, a moron, and a war criminal, and really does not feel a pressing need to hear it again.

Frank Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, has an additional and somewhat more personal complaint. In the circles in which he moves in Europe and America, he says, the animosity toward Bush and his policies is so strong that "I am embarrassed to be an American." I may be wrong, but I don't think the President is inclined to give a great deal of weight to the social embarrassments of Bishop Griswold when pondering questions of national interest and the securing of world peace. Bishop Griswold's complaint was voiced in connection with his delivering himself of moral reflections on the war. Not only is Bush's policy immoral and illegal, but, among Bishop Griswold's kind of people, it is thought to be in very bad taste. One counts on the Episcopalians to make the clinching argument against the war.

Evangelicals and Others

For the first time in years, the media have not been going on about the dangerous "religious right." Perhaps because the assumption is that Bush embodies the danger. *Newsweek* ran a long cover story on his faith, revealing, inter alia, his creepy habit of getting up early in the morning to pray and read the Bible. The story was accompanied by a column that condescendingly chided Bush for his "God talk" and helpfully reminded him that "self-examination and repentant action are critical components of any faith." (Albeit, one might note, not a conspicuous component in contemporary Islam.) Among many protesting U.S. policy, including the religiously credentialed, the theme that Bush is a religious fanatic who thinks he has a monopoly on knowing God's purposes vied with the warning that he is a Texas cowboy set upon proving his manhood, regardless of the consequences for others.

The leaders of "the religious right," and evangelical Protestants more generally, have not been notably vocal during these weeks and months. Several explanations are offered. Most evangelicals strongly support the Administration, it is said, and they assume the Administration knows that. Plus, most evangelicals do not belong to tightly organized denominations with national bureaucracies issuing pronouncements on public affairs. Dr. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention has been outspokenly supportive, as have some leaders of "parachurch" organizations. And I imagine that in many local evangelical congregations there have been a good many sermons that the aforementioned reporter might call "pro-war." But evangelical Protestant leaders have not been prominent in the public discussion. I suppose they figured they didn't have to be.

If there were such a thing as a Ramsey Award and I was in charge of it, I might give it to the president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The late Paul Ramsey, a Methodist ethicist who taught for many years at Princeton, urged upon religious leaders certain "self-denying ordinances." One such ordinance is the Wittgensteinian-sounding rule that, on those things on which one cannot speak with authority, one should remain silent. Put differently: when it is not necessary to speak, it is necessary not to speak. This came to mind as I was reading another roundup of religious pronouncements on the war. Last on the list was Gerald B. Kieschnick of the LCMS. He said, "We hold up the biblical principles of just war for our people's consideration. But our people have the freedom to form their own conclusions." I expect my friend Paul Ramsey would approve of Dr. Kieschnick's getting the Ramsey Award.

The idea is not that religious leaders should remain silent in a time of war. Far from it. Precisely as religious leaders, they should have a great deal to say that needs saying: about conflict and reconciliation in a sinful world, about the relationship between peace and justice, about the virtues of courage and self-sacrifice, about the formation of conscience under conflicting pressures, about the source of the peace in which we ultimately trust. My point, in agreement with Paul

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Ramsey, is that the trouble begins when religious leaders abandon their presumed competence as theological and moral teachers in favor of political punditry and policy prescriptions. As individuals, they may of course express political opinions, which others may take for what they are worth. But any political statement that begins with "As religious leaders, we . . . " should be accompanied by a warning label indicating the probable abuse of religion.

Then there is the Jewish community. Jews and Jewish organizations have been generally supportive of the action against Iraq. This has not escaped the attention of hard core anti-Semites who detect a Bush-Sharon conspiracy behind the entire war on terrorism, including September 11. Overt anti-Semitism is prominent in European protests, notably in France, but there are whiffs of it here as well, from both the left and the right. Pat Buchanan's new magazine, the *American Conservative*, rails against Jews in high places who are promoting American "imperialism." Buchanan rightly says that the charge of anti-Semitism is sometimes used to silence legitimate criticism, but then he tauntingly employs language that makes the charge almost irresistible. He says that the cabal of Jews in high office and influential publications who are driving Bush policy have loyalties divided between the U.S. and Israel. Or maybe not so divided after all. For them, he writes, it is a matter of "one nation, one leader, one party. Israel, Sharon, Likud." Get it? *Ein Volk, Ein Führer, Ein Partie.* This is vile, and it morally discredits Mr. Buchanan's potentially useful role in cautioning against those, both Jews and non-Jews, who sometimes appear to be beating the drums for perpetual warfare as the prescription for American vitality and leadership in the world.

Short of the City of God

Peace is a very great good. The statement is commonly attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Peace is not merely the absence of warfare but the presence of justice." St. Augustine said it first in speaking of peace as *tranquillitas ordinis.* Right order is always in short supply. And there will always be disagreement over when the use of force is required to put to right grave disorder. Setting aside the principled pacifists, the inveterate Bush-haters, and those who are always on the side that is against America, there are millions of thoughtful people both here and abroad who are profoundly uneasy about, or strongly opposed to, the war in Iraq. I believe the war is just. Whether it turns out to have been wise depends upon contingencies that are known to none but God. There are great risks in such actions. There are, it can be reasonably argued, greater risks in inaction. The decision against military action is as much a morally fraught decision as the decision for military action.

As people have tried to make their decision over the past weeks and months, the sounds of religion in the public square have, with few exceptions, not been helpful. More often than not, religious leaders have sown confusion, inflamed passions, and demeaned the traditions they are called to represent by appending them to partisan political positions. As of this writing, our nation is at war. The sound of religion that is now required is the sound of urgent prayer that our cause may be just; that, if just, it may prevail swiftly and surely and with minimal damage to innocents; and that, if it prevails, it may secure a greater measure of the *tranquillitas ordinis* that, in the City of Man so far from the final triumph of the City of God, is never more than approximate and always provisional.

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WHEN AMERICA WAS CHRISTIAN

I do not take issue with those who say that Mark Noll is today's premier historian of religion in America. His influence is all the more impressive in that he is not at Yale, Chicago, or Harvard but is Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College, the evangelical Protestant school in Illinois. We treasure him as a contributor to these pages. His productivity is daunting, and more so because his writing is always substantive and never facile. Among his major books, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* is a standard reference, and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* started a debate the end of which is nowhere in sight.

Now he comes out with a very big and important book, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 656 pp., $35). The book helps clarify for me what has been a difference in perspective between us over the years. As longtime readers know, I have devoted a good deal of attention to the ways in which this country still is—culturally, sociologically, morally, and spiritually—"Christian America," albeit very confusedly so. A difference is that Mark Noll lives and breathes the history of an earlier time when America really was Christian America, and unambiguously so. It was a Protestant America and an evangelical America, for up until the modernist-fundamentalist battles of the early twentieth century almost all Protestants called themselves evangelicals.

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In the tradition that Noll mentally inhabits, the consciousness is that of a religious and cultural empire lost. For Noll, Christian America is not about contemporary cultural or sociological analysis, or not chiefly. Christian America is what America was. In this view, and despite wan and sometimes wild efforts to restore what was, we now live in post-Protestant and, it is commonly said, post-Christian America.

With respect to American beginnings, the Protestantism described by Noll was, to borrow a phrase from Dean Acheson, present at the creation. Its people were the proprietors of the American experiment. The world in which I was formed was, by way of sharpest contrast, the world made by nineteenth-century German Lutheran immigrants. Viewed from that world, the Protestant empire of which Noll writes was the empire of "them." Moreover, my world was that of Missouri Synod Lutheranism, which was constituted and driven by the determination not to become like them. Still in the 1950s, many thought that determination had been vindicated. Books were published then with titles such as *Zion on the Mississippi* and *The Triumph of Conservative Lutheranism.* It was thought that the conservative forces (theologically called "confessional," referring to the sixteenth-century Lutheran confessions) had prevailed against the "Americanizers" who wanted Lutheranism to attain a denominational place at the imperial table of Protestant America. All that is now dramatically changed, notably with the formation of the ELCA, which has joined what is now "oldline" Protestantism, only to discover slim pickings at a table that is anything but imperial.

The Arguments and the Tune

And of course there are powerful parallels between the Lutheran and the Catholic immigrant experiences. For the Irish, Italian, German, and Polish Catholics who came to this country, Mark Noll's Christian America was at least equally a world of "them." This touches on what is called a nontheological factor that I might have discussed more fully in my article "How I Became the Catholic I Was" (FT, April 2002). Those of us whose "people" were not present at the American creation can try to appropriate and even revitalize that moment. That was the monumental effort of Father John Courtney Murray who in his 1960 book *We Hold These Truths* suggested that it is the historic mission of Catholics to breathe new life into the genius of the American founding, a genius that Protestant America had largely forgotten or repudiated. In his recent book *On Two Wings* and in other writings, Michael Novak, a Catholic with strong Slavic roots, does a fine job of telling the creation story in a way attuned to the sensibilities of those who were not there, including the heirs of the Jewish immigrant experience. And, of course, I've done my share—some would say more than my share—of writing about how to get the American experiment right. Long before Murray, there was Orestes Brownson, whom we featured in our December 2002 issue. But he and a few other Catholics like him were different in that they came out of the Protestant Christian America that they called upon Catholics to reshape, and maybe to save.

We heirs of the great unwashed of nineteenth-century immigration can get the words and the arguments right, but we have trouble with the tune. At least we don't, and perhaps can't, sing it the way it was once sung by the proprietors. In our frustration, we propose a different tune, and sometimes different words and arguments too. We speak about America as "a nation of immigrants," or contend that it is a "universal nation" bound together only by principles, not by the identity of people or tribe. The Puritans who came from England were immigrants, in a way of speaking, but not in a way anything like the immigrant experience of German Lutherans, Irish Catholics, or Polish Jews. The people whose story Mark Noll tells were here before us, and there is no reason why we should dispute that or pretend it is not important. Yes, in the beginning there were a few Catholics in Maryland, Lutherans in Pennsylvania, and Jews in New Amsterdam, but that is to quibble. And yes, Catholic Spain was here before the Puritans, but that is marginal to the beginnings of the religious, cultural, and political experiment called America. (Although today's pattern of immigration ensures that Hispanic Catholics will not be marginal to America's future.)

Lurching into Modernity

Viewed from the perspective of the people who undertook what Perry Miller called "the errand into the wilderness," the historical sequence of Christian America/attenuatedly Christian America/post-Christian America makes a good deal of sense. Indeed it is almost unavoidable. Here is the magnificent conclusion to Noll's *America's God*:

> With tradition, hierarchy, and deference to historical precedent discredited by the ideology of the Revolution, religious thinkers in the national period made do with what was left in their efforts to preserve Christian doctrine and inspire Christian practice. The materials at hand were commonsense moral reasoning, narratives of republican liberation, and the Bible. With all thought of a Christian

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establishment washed away by the republican tide, believers knew it depended upon themselves and the direct ministrations of the Holy Spirit to do what had to be done. An extraordinary mobilization of the churches was the result. The substantial contribution of this religious mobilization to the construction of a national culture—inadvertently from the Methodists, with more forethought from the older formalist churches—was, in nearly literal terms, a gift of grace.

Yet because the churches could make that gift only because they had themselves absorbed the national ideologies so thoroughly, the gift came at a high price. Uniquely in modern Western history, recognizably orthodox theology flourished in the construction of a liberal society. Yet profoundly as that theology flourished and as vitally as it helped build the nation, its inability to grasp as high as it reached was evident by the century's middle decades. As for so much else in American history, so too for theology was the Civil War a grand climax and transition.

Theological debates on the issues that led to the war drew American religious thinking deeper into the intellectual patterns that had been established between the founding of the republic and the outbreak of armed conflict. The cultural influence of those theological habits had been extraordinary, in fact so extraordinary that even the cataclysm of total war would not completely overwhelm them. Yet if these patterns—the merger of Reformed biblicism with principles of American freedom expounded by the canons of commonsense moral philosophy—were too strong to be destroyed, they were nonetheless permanently damaged.

It was thus neither farce nor irony when the religious habits of mind that had built a Protestant Christian America divided and eventually petered out after the war. It was rather a tragedy of worthy thinkers striving faithfully for noble goals who were brought down by the very synthesis of Christian theology and American ideology that had transformed their society and made them its intellectual leaders. As a result of these deeply entrenched patterns of thought, and also because of the way that theological debates over issues like the Bible and slavery were settled by armies instead of arguments, American theology lurched, rather than self-consciously thought, its way into the modern world.

Reviving and Remembering

What was left after the petering out were the habits of mind of the WASP—the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. It was not a precise designation, but it worked reasonably well in identifying those who were "them" and those who were "us." In the last half century there has been a great deal of writing about the decline of the WASP, a genre almost invented by the sociologist Digby Baltzell. I daresay that many bright high school students today have never heard the term WASP. Our society is awash in ethnic-religio-cultural identities, but it would seem that the WASP has simply disappeared. The children of the errand into the wilderness once constituted what was indubitably the Establishment, but they pushed their genes one generation too far and in the last half century accommodatingly abdicated to the cultural forces bent upon their overthrow, or, perhaps as often, joined the revolution.

That accommodation is evident, for instance, in the comatose state of the National Council of Churches. It is hard to remember that fifty years ago the NCC was an American institution comparable in status and influence to Harvard and the AMA. To cite another instance, when William Buckley published *God and Man at Yale* in 1951, an outraged Yale insisted that it was keeping faith with its founding and emphatically Christian mission. It is impossible to imagine Yale saying anything like that today. As impressive as the Protestant Christian disestablishment of the last half century has been, Mark Noll would remind us that the more consequential disestablishment, largely self-administered, happened almost a century earlier. Christian America before the Civil War was in many ways two Christian Americas, the North and the South, and the tragic fact is that the great question of slavery was not resolved by Christian theology or moral argument but by an unspeakably bloody resort to arms, thereby discrediting, in the eyes of many, the idea of Christian America.

But not all the heirs of the original errand have disappeared. Some are to be found on the other side of the family, the somewhat disreputable side of the family. The side that never stopped believing that "America's God" really is the God of the Bible. That is the side that lost the fundamentalist-modernist war in the early part of the twentieth century. The memory of Protestant Christian America is very much alive, for instance, in the Southern Baptist Convention. In an odd twist, some who cleave to that memory, and think it may be again, are today viewed as un-American. But among them are the children of the pilgrims who are now, in the phrase of historian Martin Marty, strangers in their own land. They are still on an errand

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into the wilderness, but now it is seen as a wilderness not of native savagery but of culturally regnant apostasy and secularism.

Most of them, to be sure, are not of the original stock of the proprietors. Their story of Christian American is largely that of the second Christian America, the one that lost in the Civil War. Their hope for restoration is invested in a revivalism that is native to the South, although now spread nationwide. The efforts of revivalism are typically fervent, fragmented, and lacking in intellectual coherence. If the heirs of the first Christian America—grounded in the New England story of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, of principled argument and confident tradition—are largely missing from action today, their work is being done, to the extent it is being done, by Catholics and Reformed Protestants, pretty much as Fr. Murray foresaw (although he missed the Reformed Protestant part).

These things must be kept in mind when you hear some of us contending that America is, however ambiguously and complicatedly, a Christian society. It is a great contribution of Mark Noll's work, and especially of *America's God*, that it alerts us to the fact that there are others who, when they hear the mention of Christian America, respond, "Ah yes, I remember it well."

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ I recently noted the full court press that the Society of Jesus is applying in support of homosexuality and gay priests. The campaign continues with the March issue of *Theological Studies*, the academic journal published by the Jesuits. Three articles frontally attack the Church's teaching on sexuality and marriage. In "The Open Debate: Moral Theology and the Lives of Gay and Lesbian Persons," Father James F. Keenan, professor of moral theology at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Massachusetts, leaves no doubt that he thinks it is a legitimate debate and it is wide open. He cites numerous gay and gay-friendly Catholic thinkers who agree with him. "[I]n comparison to the other Christian churches, the Vatican's position has changed only a little even though a lively debate exists within the Church at every other level. The Vatican's teaching remains so because its contemporary exponents privilege as a condition of truthfulness a teaching's unchanged status." Put differently, the "contemporary exponents," including John Paul II and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, impermissibly "privilege" their view on the odd assumption that two millennia of consistent Christian teaching has something to do with truth. The authors whom Keenan favorably cites challenge the reluctance of the late moral theologian, Richard McCormick, to affirm that the homosexual condition and homogenital acts are "good and normal." McCormick has been outdated by developments that, writes Xavier Seubert, "initially appear threatening and disruptive" but lead to a recognition that "homosexuality can be a new name for its own embodying manifestation of Godlife." John Paul's extensive writings on nuptial sexuality are criticized for "privileging gender complementarity and providing grounds for excluding the moral validity of expressed same-sex love." Homosexuality was once viewed in terms of inversion, and Keenan is taken with the suggestion that we should find consolation "in God's revolutionary movements of inverting all things." He concludes his reflection with this: "The open debate is an extensive one, occurring throughout the Catholic world. As they engage in this debate, moral theologians do not superficially validate personal lifestyles but rather propose a variety of criteria for assessing the morality of the way ordinary gay and lesbian persons live their lives. The debate helps us to see, then, that the Catholic tradition is rich, human, and capable of being relevant to help gay and lesbian persons find moral ways of living out their lives and the ways they are called to love. Gay and lesbian persons respond offering, from their experience, a variety of ways of imagining not only their own self-understanding, but the way we are called to be Church. Like other groups of people who have been oppressed by, among others, the Church, they help us to see that by silencing and marginalizing them, we do harm to them, ourselves, the Church, and the gospel." Now if only the current exponents of "the Vatican's teaching" could get over their habit of privileging Scripture and tradition in order to overdetermine the "truth" about human sexuality.

■ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Dvesti let Vmeste (1795-1995) (Two Hundred Years Together)* has yet to appear in English, but Daniel J. Mahoney has a splendid review essay on the first volume in *Society*. The "together" in the title refers to Russians and Jews, and Mahoney convincingly rebuts the slander that Solzhenitsyn's Russian patriotism entails a form of anti-Semitism. At the same time, Solzhenitsyn does not evade questions that some will not touch for fear of being charged with anti-Semitism. Mahoney writes: "Any adequate treatment of the Russian 'Jewish question' must sooner or later confront the difficult question of

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Jewish involvement in the various revolutionary movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Solzhenitsyn rightly insists that this question cannot remain 'taboo' for the serious historian of Russia and the modern world. But it is necessary for the historian to read carefully, displaying scrupulous respect for the facts and doing nothing to inflame already overheated passions. Solzhenitsyn condemns those extremist elements on the right who have irresponsibly blamed the Jews for the Bolshevik plague—even as he cannot ignore the fact that a disproportionate number of Jews participated in various leftist revolutionary movements. Solzhenitsyn confronts this delicate issue equitably and forthrightly. . . . [H]e praises the Jewish people for their positive contributions to capitalist economic development and democratic politics. He praises the commitment of many responsible Jewish leaders to the path of political moderation. But he also laments the 'unreasonable' choice of some de-Judaized Jews for totalitarian and revolutionary politics. This choice for revolution was unreasonable but understandable: the revolutionary intelligentsia welcomed educated Jews to their ranks and offered an easy path to assimilation for those Jews who had broken with the traditional Jewish community. The old regime, in contrast, vacillated between enlightened efforts at accommodation between Russians and Jews and imposing humiliating restrictions that could only feed revolutionary discontent. The revolutionaries not only welcomed Jews to their ranks but provided a messianic secular religion—a universalist political mission—to those who rejected the seemingly provincial and antiquated traditions of their fathers." As he has written before, notably in *August 1914*, Solzhenitsyn laments the assassination of Pyotr Stolypin, the Russian prime minister from 1906 to 1911, who he believes was the one man who could have conserved what was good in the old regime by making necessary adaptations, not least in granting full rights to Jews. Mahoney concludes, "This very Russian book does not draw any grandiose theoretical conclusions about 'the Jewish question.' But it reminds its readers of those universal traits of soul that are essential in every time and place: moderation, repentance, courage, balanced judgment, and statesmanlike dedication to the public good." If only such traits were more universal.

■ Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State reflects in *Books & Culture* on two new books on American religion, *The Religious History of America* by Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh E. Schmidt (HarperSanFrancisco), and *Religion in American Life* by Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer (Oxford University Press). Jenkins is generally favorable toward both, although he is doubtful about the distinction made by Butler et al. between religious and "secular" history, since America's "secular" history is inseparable from religion. He also marvels at the ephemeral nature of what is taken to be important. "In the 1970s, everyone knew that the most important fact in American religious life was the growth of the New Age and the 'culting of America'—a perspective that now looks incredibly dated." And he wonders why Randall Balmer devotes so much attention to Promise Keepers while ignoring the pro-life movement. But his chief disappointment with the books is that neither addresses the remarkable difference between the vitality of religion in America and its dismal decline in Western Europe. Jenkins writes: "Even for America's most supposedly secular social movements, the most potent rhetoric still draws on underlying religious assumptions and frames problems in the language of martyrdom and crucifixion, of righteous victims and evil Pharisees. Witness the crucifixion imagery in media accounts of the death of gay martyr Matthew Shepard, or the powerful themes of martyrdom and vindication running consistently through black political rhetoric. One reason that Bill Clinton retained the presidency for eight years was that he was such a master of the pseudo-evangelical oratory that clearly resonates with large sections of the American public, at the same time that it appalls secular Europeans. Why, though, should such similar economic, cultural, and demographic trends seem on the face of it to have produced such radically different consequences on either side of the Atlantic? I don't have an answer, and I am little the wiser for reading these books. But perhaps this transnational approach represents yet another kind of 'diversity' that will reshape a future generation of American religious history."

■ Eamon Duffy, professor of history at Cambridge, came to favorable and well-deserved attention with his 1994 book, *The Stripping of the Altars*, a convincing revisionist history of the English Reformation. Support for Henry VIII and the expropriation of the Church in England, he demonstrated in great detail, was found among a relatively small number of dissenters centered in London, while the great majority of the population was devoutly Catholic and wanted to remain so. The reviews of his 1998 book, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, were decidedly more mixed. In these pages and elsewhere, puzzlement was expressed about his palpable hostility toward Paul VI and, most particularly, John Paul II. The puzzlement appears to be resolved by the transcript of a long interview Duffy gave to PBS's *Frontline* in connection with its production, "John Paul II: The Millennial

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Pope." The Pope, he says, is something of a mystic but "[he] misses the opportunity of discovering that the mystery of life is even more beautiful than the beauty of the Church. That life as such is beautiful and warm, and that we don't need any mediator . . . like Jesus Christ, dying for our sins on the cross. Life doesn't need that. But life doesn't claim as much because life is over when you die." Duffy, it seems, is no longer a Catholic or a Christian, and he rather resents the fact that the Pope is. "You can't claim that Jesus rose from the dead if he didn't, historically speaking," says Duffy. "You cannot develop the world of dreams. You have to go back to reality. . . .That's what I call the mystery of life. And I think saying that there will be no resurrection for us makes life richer, gets all our power back from heaven to this earth. . . . I'm glad that I have found a way, or a way has been given to me, to get out of that building of the Church and move on to a universe which may be cold, but which has an enormous reach and is endless and has enormous promise." Duffy complains about the Pope's position on the ordination of women and his insistence upon priestly celibacy, but his deeper complaint is that he is "sticking to old doctrine" and, by his enormous popularity, encouraging others to do likewise. "I have taken a long journey from a devout believer to a skeptic," he says. He describes himself as a theologian who, "having given up all the promises of the Christian faith, having given up resurrection and eternal life," is now a man "who's proud to be on this earth and who sees the beauty of this earth." The interview makes for very sad reading. Eamon Duffy is a historian of great talents, with a gift for illuminating unsuspected aspects of the past. One cannot help but wonder at how fragile must have been the props of a faith that collapsed into such banalities. Pray for him.

■ The 223 Catholic colleges and universities in the country are, like most colleges and universities, constantly examining themselves, comparing themselves with other (mostly elite) institutions, and devising and revising "mission statements." As odd as it may seem, the one question that usually doesn't get asked is how they're doing in proposing to their students the challenge of Catholic faith and life. In 1998, Father James Burtchaell published his invaluable *The Dying of the Light*, showing the ways in which Catholic and other religious colleges have—bit by bit and sometimes at a gallop—abandoned their constituting purpose. A decade ago, John Paul II issued *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church), laying out a course of renewal for Catholic colleges that are serious about being Catholic. Now the Cardinal Newman Society and *Catholic World Report* have commissioned a study of thirty-eight fairly representative Catholic colleges and universities, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The findings make for grim reading. On moral teachings (abortion, homosexuality, casual sex) and in sacramental observance, entering freshmen are dramatically less Catholic by the time they are seniors. (The sobering details are laid out in the March issue of *CWR*.) The study was widely reported in newspapers and elicited some unsurprising reactions. Monika Hellwig, for instance, is president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and a strong opponent of what she views as *Ex Corde*'s threat to academic freedom. There isn't all that much that Catholic schools can do, she suggests. "Students look at movies, at their friends, at their families, at everything around them, and that doesn't mean Catholic colleges are failing." I'm not sure what she is saying. That students would be more Catholic if they didn't look at movies, friends, families, and everything else? Maybe Ms. Hellwig does think that, for her view of what it means to be Catholic seems terribly constricting. She says, "The question is whether the task of higher education in our pluralistic, changing society is to lock students into rules—even rules I agree with—or to teach them critical thinking." To be Catholic, one is given to understand, means being locked into rules. The problem is, it would seem, that colleges have all these freshmen coming in with their rigid indoctrination, victims of authoritarian catechesis, mindless ciphers locked into traditional rules, and the college's task is to liberate them by teaching them "critical thinking." And what should they think critically about if not the Catholicism by which they are, whether they know it or not, oppressed? Never mind that most entering freshmen today are thoroughgoing relativists who have but the slightest acquaintance with Catholic teaching. Never mind that the Christian, and specifically Catholic, intellectual tradition is the richest and most adventuresome known to man. By comparison with that tradition, modernity's notion of "critical thinking" is pretty thin gruel. For Ms. Hellwig and others who think in conformity to the stereotype of the ghettoized Catholic mind of fifty years ago, however, Catholicism is the problem from which higher education is the escape. The alternative to that way of thinking is the daunting challenge proposed by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Some astute observers believe that, of the 223 nominally Catholic colleges and universities in the country, perhaps as many as a third are so alienated from their constituting purpose that they are safely beyond the reach of the sparks of renewal. Some will go out of business, others will drop all pretense of being Catholic or even of being, as many say today, "in the Catholic tradition" (or, in some cases, "in the Jesuit tradition"). Many

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others, however, are engaged in earnest conversation about strengthening their "Catholic identity," and are edging up to the conclusion that Catholic identity involves being identifiably Catholic. Especially in theology and philosophy departments, there is powerful resistance by tenured refugees from what they call "the pre-Vatican II Church." They view *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* as an attempt to reverse the putative liberation that is the story of their lives. They are the entrenched defenders of the status quo. Arrayed against their hold on so much Catholic higher education are the sure but painfully slow remedies of retirement and mortality. And efforts such as the Cardinal Newman Society with its students who have learned to think critically about the "critical thinking" that stands between them and the high intellectual and spiritual adventure of a Catholic education.

■ *Newdow II* is the decision of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals not to reconsider *Newdow I*, which declared the public school voluntary recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, with its reference to a nation "under God," to be an unconstitutional establishment of religion. This led to a predictable, and perfectly understandable, public outcry, and it is expected that the first decision by a two-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit will be reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court. In the latest round, Judge Diarmuid F. O'Scannlain, joined by five other judges, wrote a forceful dissent. After reviewing the convoluted precedents of the courts on church-state questions, he writes: "But *Newdow II* goes further, and confers a favored status on atheism in our public life. In a society with a pervasive public sector, our public schools are a most important means for transmitting ideas and values to future generations. The silence the majority commands is *not* neutral—it itself conveys a powerful message, and creates a distorted impression about the place of religion in our national life. The absolute prohibition on any mention of God in our schools creates a bias *against* religion. The panel majority cannot credibly advance the notion that *Newdow II* is neutral with respect to belief versus nonbelief; it affirmatively favors the latter to the former. One wonders, does atheism become the default religion protected by the Establishment Clause?" William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, says strong action is called for: "It is up to the teachers in the nine western states affected by this decision to break the law: they should instruct their students on the meaning of civil disobedience and then practice it. All they need to do is call the cops and local TV reporters and then recite the Pledge of Allegiance in their presence. It needs to be shown on television all over the world that as the U.S. prepares to go to war to maintain the liberties symbolized in the Pledge, there are brave men, women, and children at home who are prepared to fight tyranny on our own soil." Civil disobedience is serious business, and I'm not sure students should be encouraged to break the law in protest against lawless courts. *Newdow* probably would not reach a purely student-initiated and student-led recitation of the Pledge, however, and that might be the best response until the Supreme Court gets around to overruling the secularist fanatics on the Ninth Circuit.

■ Always of interest are the views of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. After the Pope, he is the most important guardian of the Church's teaching. In a recent interview he addressed the Christian foundation of European culture, how the pontificate of John Paul II might be viewed by history, and the Church's relationship with other religions. On the meaning of Europe: "I am convinced that Europe must not just be something economic [or] political; rather, it is in need of spiritual foundations. It is a historical fact that Europe is Christian, and that it has grown on the foundation of the Christian faith, which continues to be the foundation of the values for this continent, which in turn has influenced other continents. It is imperative to have a foundation of values and, if we ask ourselves what that foundation is, we realize that, beyond the confessions, there are no others outside the great values of the Christian faith. And this is why it is imperative that in the future Constitution of Europe mention is made of the Christian foundations of Europe. I do not wish to fall into the error of constructing a political Catholicism. The faith does not provide political recipes, but indicates the foundations. On one hand, politics has its autonomy, but on the other there is no total separation between politics and faith. There are foundations of the faith that later allow for political reasoning. The question, therefore, is what are these foundations that will enable politics to function? What are the aspects that must be left free? In the first place, it is critical to have an anthropological moral vision, and here faith enlightens us. Is the person of God necessary to have this anthropological vision, which guarantees the freedom of political reasoning? A morality that dispenses with God [will] fragment. . . . Moreover [to mention God] is not an act of violence against anyone; it does not destroy anyone's freedom, but opens to all the free space to be able to construct a truly human, moral life." On the pontificate of John Paul II: "I am not a prophet; that is why I do not dare say what they will say in fifty years, but I think the fact that the Holy Father has been present in all areas of the Church will be extremely important. In this way,

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he has created an extremely dynamic experience of catholicity and of the unity of the Church. The synthesis between catholicity and unity is a symphony—it is not uniformity. The Church Fathers said it. Babylon was uniformity, and technology creates uniformity. The faith, as seen at Pentecost where the apostles spoke all languages, is symphony: it is plurality in unity. This is manifested with great clarity in the Holy Father's pontificate, with his pastoral visits, his meetings. I think some documents will be important forever: I want to mention the encyclicals *Redemptoris Missio, Veritatis Splendor, Evangelium Vitae,* and also *Fides et Ratio.* These are four documents that will really be monuments for the future. Lastly, I think he will be remembered for his openness to the other Christian communities, to the other religions of the world, to the secular world, to the sciences, to the political world. In these areas he has always made reference to the faith and its values, but at the same time he has also shown that the faith is able to enter into dialogue with everyone." On world religions: "The Holy Father sees his own mission as a mission of conciliation in the world, a mission of peace. Whereas in the past, unfortunately, there were religious wars, the Holy Father wishes to show that the right relation between religions is not war, nor violence; it is dialogue, and the attempt to understand the elements of truth that are found in the other religions. The Holy Father does not want to relativize the uniqueness of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, but he wants to show that this truth about Christ cannot be proclaimed with violence or with human power, but only with the force of truth. And for this, a human contact of dialogue and love is necessary, as the apostles showed in the great mission of the early Church: without making use of worldly power, using the force of conviction. The testimony of suffering, of charity, and of dialogue convinced the ancient world. The Holy Father simply tries to nurture this force of dialogue and love of the first centuries in the relation with the religions." To which I have nothing to add, except that I would have included the encyclicals *Centesimus Annus* and *Ut Unum Sint.* The former evidences an historic development in the Church's teaching on what constitutes a free and just society, and the latter lays out the theology undergirding an irrevocable commitment to Christian unity that is much more than "openness to the other Christian communities."

■ "An eighty-two-year-old brand faces a dilemma: How to keep the aging baby boomer guard happy and yet reach for a younger, more diverse demographic?" reports *Brandweek,* an advertising magazine. The American Civil Liberties Union is launching its first "branding campaign," a three to four million dollar effort, this spring. An ACLU officer says, "A pressing concern is the success that people who oppose some of our issues have had in portraying us as an organization on the fringe. This branding campaign will enable us to define ourselves." Michael Dukakis proclaimed himself "a card carrying member," but it seems now the test of true commitment is to get yourself branded. More seriously, there was a time, a long time ago, when the ACLU played a useful role in protecting free speech and association rights for unpopular minorities. Those were the days when most of its members—who are now, according to the story, typically retired—signed up. In the last several decades, however, the ACLU has become a radical partisan in the culture wars, devoting most of its energies to an uncompromising defense of the unlimited abortion license, agitation for gay "marriage" and other putative rights, and an extreme interpretation of church-state relations that restricts the free exercise of religion. The sad story is well told in William Donohue's 1994 book, *Twilight of Liberty* (Transaction). If "fringe" means dramatically out of step with mainstream discourse, no branding campaign will change the fact that the ACLU is "an organization on the fringe."

■ Things are getting awfully complicated. The Sunday bulletin of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Springfield, Virginia, notes that at communion people have the choice of individual cup or chalice, real wine or nonalcoholic wine. Then there is this: "On the pulpit side a male communion assistant will serve the common cup; a female communion assistant will serve the individual cups. On the baptism side, the procedure will be reversed." In my Lutheran boyhood we were told that form and philosophical explanations such as "transubstantiation" didn't matter. "The only thing that matters," it was said, "is that you are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ." Now so many things seem to matter.

■ "Jesus Plus Nothing: Undercover among America's Secret Theocrats." That's the title of a big heavy-breathing story in Lewis Lapham's *Harper's.* The author, a Jeffrey Sharlet, sneaked himself into a Christian fellowship in Washington, D.C., that aims at evangelizing influentials both foreign and domestic. The group's leader, Doug Coe, is also involved in organizing the annual National Prayer Breakfast, at which Presidents since Eisenhower have made an appearance. Mr. Sharlet, pretending sympathy, lived and worked with members of the group for several weeks at their house near Washington. His long article swings between cheap sneers at the group's evangelical piety and warnings against their sinister

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"theocratic" belief that Jesus is Lord of the whole world. Jesus is everything, they say, hence the "Jesus plus nothing" of the article's title. We are informed that one young man in the group has a laugh "that made him sound like a donkey," and another has "a chin like a plow, and he sang in a choir." *Harper's* has got real class. I have indicated before my reservations about the theologically dubious religious boosterism of events such as the National Prayer Breakfast, and there are no doubt valid criticisms to be made of Mr. Coe's enterprise. This article, however, is no more than a juvenile rant. The responsibility for the publication of this distasteful exercise rests with Mr. Lapham, who once again leaves no doubt that he wants his readers to despise conservative Christians, maybe all who are more than nominally Christian. And he wants his readers to be afraid. Those Christians don't believe in democracy. How could they? They believe that Jesus is Lord. And they really don't like liberals. Be very afraid.

■ Canadian and overseas subscribers complain that their issues sometimes arrive weeks later than those delivered in the U.S. The problem was with the U.S. Postal Service. I say "was" because we've switched to an independent carrier that promises to get issues to the postal service in your country more quickly. No complaint goes unanswered. Which does not mean that every problem gets resolved. But we work at it.

■ Every once in a while, it seems maybe twice a year, an article appears in the left-liberal world of opinion suggesting that it may be a strategic mistake to depict religion as the enemy. And, in fact, some organizations make a point of highlighting from time to time their religious support, usually drawn from oldline Protestant churches. Pro-abortion groups, for instance, sponsor ancillary units of clergy endorsing "reproductive rights." But the antireligious animus runs deep. A friend visits the website of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and finds these bumper stickers for sale: "Against Abortion? Wear a Condom, Dude!" "Born Again Pagan," "Back Off—I'm a Goddess," "Don't Pray in My School and I Won't Think in Your Church," and "Doing My Part to P*** Off the Radical Right" (asterisks added). As the last indicates, poking a finger in the eye of the opposition is just too much fun to resist. It is true that almost all advocacy organizations rabble their natural constituencies by pillorying the opposition. But is there any other public cause that exults in ranting against the sensibilities and beliefs of the great majority of Americans? None comes to mind. I expect those cautionary left-liberal articles will continue to appear from time to time, but to little effect. NOW and cognate organizations will continue to attack religion as the enemy of their cause. In largest part because it is.

■ There was a time when this would have been much more than a footnote. The U.S. Education Department has issued a four-page document, "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools." Beginning in the 1940s, the Supreme Court began imposing its interpretation of the religion clause of the First Amendment on the states. There were enormous uproars about "taking God out of the public schools." Finally, in 1984, the Congress passed the Equal Access Act, making clear that the government classroom is not a religion-free space, and it was upheld by the Court. In 1995, the Clinton Education Department issued "guidelines" very similar to the new document, except that the latter includes penalties for schools that don't follow the guidelines. While making clear that schools cannot formally sponsor prayer, the regulations are now religion-friendly and respect free exercise. When one considers that this settlement involves a major change in constitutional interpretation and practice on an issue that for decades generated the most intense public debate, there is reason for gratitude that sometimes—more often than we might be inclined to think—the system works. Lest one get carried away by encouragement, it should be noted that legal groups protecting religious freedom will continue to have plenty of work to do in seeing that local school districts abide by the rules.

■ I see that the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., held a conference titled "Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Politics in America." They had some fine speakers and I expect it was a worthwhile event, but I was a bit puzzled by this in the announcement: "Despite talk of a 'naked public square,' religion has never really lost its place in American public life." That is a truism that nobody—certainly not I—has denied. But, if in some important ways religion has not been absent, why was the conference called "Religion Returns to the Public Square"? Just asking.

■ Another spat in a long-running quarrel. In the *New York Review of Books*, Istvan Deak takes apart David Kertzer's *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*. Kertzer responds with a long and angry letter, concluding with this: "The Church never called for the murder of the Jews as a solution to the Jewish problem, much less their mass extermination. Yet the Church's vilification of the Jews in the decades preceding the Holocaust—accusing

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them of the most diabolical treachery and representing them as a danger to Christian society and Christian people—played an undeniable role in allowing the Nazis' more lethal brand of anti-Semitism to gain popularity. This is the historical truth that the Vatican continues to deny, and that Deak's misrepresentation of my work should not obscure." That is some distance from the argument indicated in Kertzer's subtitle and running throughout his book. Anti-Judaism—religious, cultural, and political—was common, not just for decades but for centuries, and undoubtedly created a climate that could be and was exploited by the new and lethal thing that became race-based modern anti-Semitism. Nobody, including the Vatican, denies that. As Deak points out in his response, however, the Church was emphatically opposed to a racist anti-Jewish prejudice, strongly encouraging the conversion of Jews and Christian intermarriage with Jews. He writes, "There were many popes, bishops, and ordinary clergymen who hated the Jews with passion, but the Church as an institution has never embraced racist doctrines. This is what makes the task of the critics of the Church so difficult." He offers no evidence in support of his "many popes," but nobody should be surprised if there were some popes who did hate Jews. There is hardly a sin of which some popes were not guilty. Kertzer is not as wildly out of control as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (*A Moral Reckoning*), but his shoddy scholarship and reckless accusations fully deserve the sharp critiques provided by Istvan Deak and others. (For FT's review of Kertzer, see William D. Rubinstein's "Case for the Prosecution," February 2002; see also comments by Russell Hittinger in While We're At It, Public Square, March 2002. A comprehensive debunking of charges against Pius XII in particular is Ronald Rychlak's "Goldhagen vs. Pius XII," FT, June/July 2002.) Culture, religion, politics, economics, nationalism, popular prejudices—everything is connected to everything else. But, in pinning the blame for the Holocaust where it most importantly, albeit not exclusively, belongs, nobody has gotten beyond the classic *Commentary* essay by Milton Himmelfarb, "No Hitler, No Holocaust."

■ This is unusual television fare. Promoting an upcoming segment on *Dateline*, Jane Pauley said, "Still ahead, the latest round of bloodshed and violence at abortion clinics." At last they are going to show what really happens at abortuaries: cutting bodies of babies in pieces, plucking out the bloody limbs one by one, puncturing the heads of infants and sucking out the brains. At last, one thought, at least one network has the nerve to tell the truth about abortion. Then Ms. Pauley completed her message: "The anti-abortion movement has been creeping to the edge of bloody fanaticism for a decade."

■ Apologetics—as in explaining, not apologizing for—has made a big comeback in recent years. Sara Maitland evaluates the twentieth-anniversary edition of Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk*, which, she says, is an exercise in apologetics that has enabled many feminists, especially in the academy, to remain within a Christian framework, broadly defined. Along the way she describes how some folks, such as Ruether, do apologetics: "Take the bits of the faith you like, denounce the rest as 'cultural accretions,' apply some syncretic glue, and carry on regardless." Perfect.

■ Bernard Bailyn and Gordon S. Wood. In the writing of America's history these two are contemporary giants. Bailyn's new book, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* (Knopf), is currently receiving a good deal of attention, mostly favorable. Wood's critique in the *New York Review of Books* begins with several thousand words of high praise for Bailyn's achievements and influence in the guild of historians. Only toward the end do we get to their fundamental disagreement. The success of the American experiment, says Wood contra Bailyn, is not attributable to the alleged genius of the Founders. He writes, "Ultimately our system works because we continue to respect the laws and conventions that we have collectively created over the past two hundred years, including some things that many of the Founders strenuously opposed, such as judicial review and political parties. . . . The most important fact about the Founders may not have been the creativity of their imaginations but their Englishness. The English had worked out a respect for the law and a semblance of popular self-government, however flawed by modern standards, long before the Americans. Whatever innovations Americans made to their English heritage, and they were undeniably considerable, their ultimate success in governing themselves and protecting individual freedom owed more to their colonial experience as Englishmen than it did to their constitutional inventions in 1787. From decades of experience they had acquired an instinctive knowledge of English liberty and the English common law, and this inherited and inherent knowledge, this long experience with English political culture, was what ultimately enabled them to succeed as well as they did in establishing new governments. If the Founders' success were due simply to the new political institutions and divisions of power they created in 1787 and 1788, then presumably these inventions could be transplanted anywhere, but we

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know from experience that this is not possible. It's time that we realize that our so-called Founding is not the source of our political and constitutional achievement. We owe our success to the common sense of the American people throughout our entire history, and our continued success will depend upon that common sense and not upon the creative movement of the Founding." So who is right, Bailyn or Wood? As is not my wonted way, I say both. The importance of England, Englishness, and American common sense cannot be discounted. At the same time, the genius of the Founders in, for instance, denying the state control over public deliberation about its own moral legitimacy, a denial secured in the First Amendment, was an innovation far beyond anything ventured by any known polity. This aspect of the American experiment—and "experiment" continues to be the right word—is powerfully illuminated by Michael Novak's recent *On Two Wings*. Whether that self-denying ordinance was a product of genius or political necessity may be debated, but it was a *novum*. That it has, for the most part, been respected in practice is a tribute to the common sense of Americans, just as Gordon Wood says.

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Sources: WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Open Jesuits, *Theological Studies*, March 2003. Daniel J. Mahoney on Solzhenitsyn, *Society*, November/December 2002. Philip Jenkins on American religion, *Books & Culture*, January/February 2003. Interview with Eamon Duffy, www.pbs.org. Interview with Cardinal Ratzinger, ZENIT, December 3, 2002. The ACLU's branding campaign, *Brandweek*, October 14, 2002. Complicated communion, *Forum Letter*, March 2003. "Jesus Plus Nothing," *Harper's*, March 2003. Istvan Deak on David Kertzer, *New York Review of Books*, March 13, 2003. Jane Pauley on bloodshed at abortion clinics, Media Research Center press release, February 20, 2003. Sara Maitland on apologetics, *Times Literary Supplement*, February 7, 2002. Gordon Wood on Bernard Bailyn, *New York Review of Books*, February 13, 2003.

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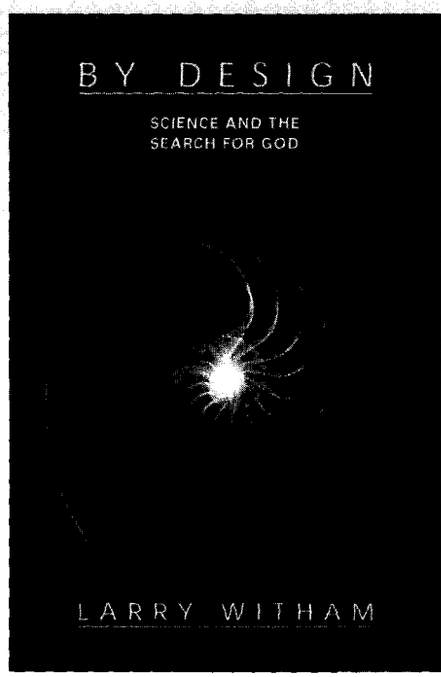
BY DESIGN

Science and the Search for God

By Larry Witham



"While the controversy between creationists and evolutionary biologists has occupied a great deal of the public's attention, Witham points out that scientists and theologians have been dealing with other matters just as weighty and as provocative. He covers topics ranging from the anthropic principle (which argues that the universe's design implies that human life is its intended goal) and genetic engineering to astronomy and intelligent design.... Witham adeptly charts the course of the science and religion dialogue as the participants continue to search for common ground."

–Publishers Weekly

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By the middle of the 20th century, as far as science was concerned, God was either dead or irrelevant—case closed. But in the past two decades, as prize winning science writer Larry Witham shows in this brilliant book of people and ideas, the case has been reopened from an unlikely source—science itself. Cutting edge research in physics, biochemistry, genetics, information theory, and neuroscience is now causing some scientists to mention a Creator in the same breath with scientific theorems.

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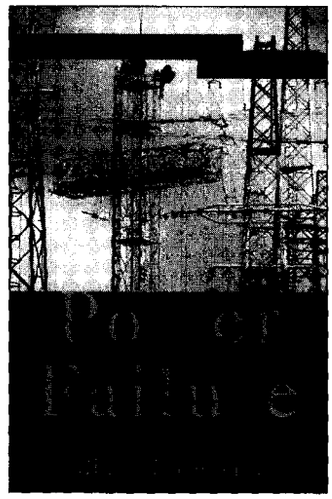

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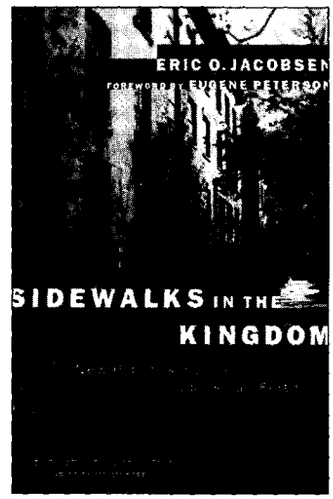

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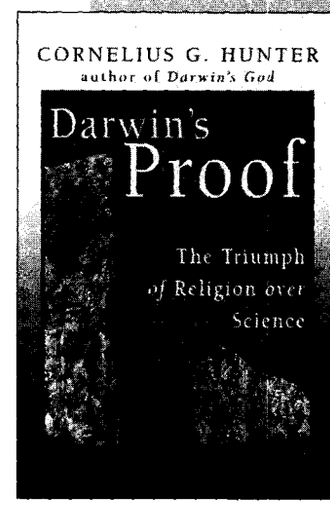

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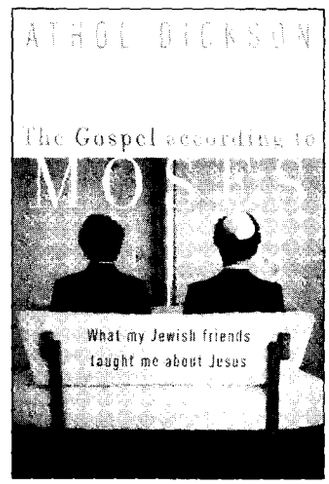

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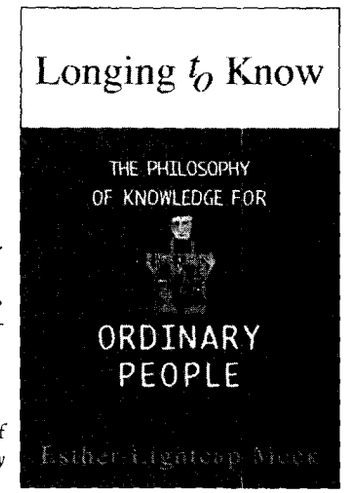

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